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THE NATURE AND EVIDENCES OF REGENERATION.

BY THE REV. G. T. FOX, M. A.

THE NATURE
AND EVIDENCES OF REGENERATION.

THE NATURE AND EVIDENCES

OF

REGENERATION.

BY THE

REV. GEORGE TOWNSHEND FOX, M.A.

With a Preface by the

REV. OCTAVIUS WINSLOW, D.D.

Incumbent of Emmanuel Church, Brighton.

BIBLIOTHECA
OCT 1 '80
BODLEIANA

LONDON:

WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY,

HOLLES STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE;

AND ALDINE CHAMBERS, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1872.

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TO THE

VENERABLE

EDWARD PREST, M.A.,

Rector of Gateshead,

AND

ARCHDEACON OF DURHAM.

My Dear Friend,

I am tempted to dedicate the following pages to you, not merely as an expression of the warm friendship which has existed between us, now these many years, but likewise for the two following reasons.

In the first place, it was an address which you gave at a prayer meeting, in St. Nicholas' School-room, that originally suggested the thoughts afterwards expanded into this series of discourses.

Secondly, because in looking back upon the past, I can well remember the time when your views of that great cardinal truth, the New Birth, were anything but clear and distinct; nor have I any reminiscenses more agreeable than those connected with that period of your life, when it pleased God to manifest Himself to you as He doeth not unto the world, and when the Holy Ghost took of the things of Christ and showed them to your soul.

Never can I forget the deep interest with which I watched, during the early portion of your ministerial career, that gradual development of your mind, which, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, led you on to clearer views of the doctrine of the New Birth, and of many other topics of spiritual religion, enabling you at length

to obtain a vigorous grasp of the truth so clearly enunciated in the third chapter of St. John; and to which gracious enlightenment, accompanied by new earnestness of spiritual life, I would ascribe the success that has since attended your ministry, in that populous and difficult sphere amidst which your lot has been cast in the providence of God.

That your life may long be spared to prosecute those labours, and to render further service to the Church of Christ, is the sincere prayer of

Your affectionate friend,

G. T. FOX.

Durham,
25th March, 1872.

INTRODUCTORY PREFACE.

I HAVE risen from the perusal of the following pages (kindly favoured by the author) with the conviction that any venture on my part, either to introduce or to supplement the Treatise—able and exhaustive as it is—would be an act of pure supererogation. Disclaiming, then, any such intention, a word or two confirmatory of the vital truth on which it so scripturally and lucidly treats,—that thus in the mouth

of two witnesses it may be established,—is all that I can allow myself to compass.

Such a confirmation, however humble, must have its weight in a day when, perhaps, no 'declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us' who maintain the Evangelical system of revealed truth, is more impugned and perverted than the doctrine of the NEW BIRTH. Simply to state the fact that, in direct and virulent antagonism to this essential tenet of the Christian Faith stands the SACERDOTAL and SACRAMENTARIAN theory, so prevalent and popular, is sufficient to indicate the prominent position which it occupies, the nature and strength of the forces by which it is assailed, and the

solemn and imperious obligation of those who hold it, to contend earnestly for this fundamental Article of the "Faith once delivered to the saints." A faint reflection of a few of the salient points discussed in the present work, is all that seems necessary in order to indicate the line of thought it pursues, and thus secure the earnest and devout perusal of all into whose hands the volume may happily fall.

Like a 'wise master-builder,' the Author begins by laying deep and broad the foundation of his theme. The *necessity* of the New Birth he scripturally and forcibly shows to lie *in the original, entire, and universal depravity of our nature.* So long as

this fact is denied, or, if not actually denied, is yet toned down to so fine and attenuated a line as to lose all distinctness and reality, men will never admit the existence, or feel the absolute *necessity* of, a personal and spiritual regeneration wrought by the power and grace of the Holy Ghost. We sometimes obtain a tolerably accurate idea of the nature of a disease from the mode of its remedy. Let any mind, competent to grapple with the subject,

"Survey the wondrous cure,"

and behold the Creator of all worlds and the Maker of all beings impaled upon a rugged cross as the Atoning Victim for man's transgression; then, in its solemn,

searching light, let him learn what must be the lost condition of the soul,—what its total depravity, and its utter ruin, the salvation of which demanded an Expedient so unheard of, a Sacrifice so immeasurable, — the shedding of blood so priceless and precious! Our Author has so skilfully probed to its core the moral wound of the soul, and has so distinctly indicated the diagnostics of the fatal disease, as clearly to demonstrate the absolute necessity of Christ's solemn and reiterated declaration: "Except a man be BORN AGAIN, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Oh, that these scriptural statements and impressive appeals, touching the original and total depravity of man's nature,

and involving the absolute necessity of HOLINESS, without which we cannot see the Lord, may sink deeply into the heart of every unregenerate reader of these pages!

Another truth placed in a clear and convincing light is one which has often perplexed, if not distressed, the minds of many readers of the Bible, and not unfrequently divided the opinions even of expositors themselves. I refer to those declarations in the Epistle of St. John, which appear to teach the impossibility of sinning in the truly regenerate. The passages are these: "Whosoever abideth in Him cannot sin;" "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because

he is born of God;" "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." Our author presents what I deem the only proper solution of the difficulty, when he refers to the *impersonation* of the Divine nature in the regenerate, as supplying the true interpretation of these otherwise apparently inexplicable and irreconcilable passages. The Apostle Peter affirms of the regenerate, that they are "partakers of the Divine nature."* A similar expression is employed by the Apostle Paul, when he speaks of sanctified affliction as making us "partakers of His (God's) holiness."† Now, as our author clearly shows, it is this NEW and DIVINE

* 1 Peter i. 4. † Heb. xii. 10.

nature in the believer that—"cannot sin, because he is born of God." On another occasion the Apostle, speaking of the "old man" and of the "new man," clearly defines the two natures of the believer: the old nature transmitted by the first Adam, the new nature imparted by the Second Adam. The same complex nature of God's people is set forth by a military figure in the Canticles. "What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of *two armies*,"—two opposite and antagonistic forces, waging an incessant and deadly conflict the one with the other. With this key we are able to unlock the words of that somewhat perplexing page of the Apostle's personal experience, re-

corded in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans,—a chapter so difficult to reconcile with a state of grace, that the learned and astute Archbishop Whately takes refuge from the perplexity in the idea that Paul was speaking of his state *before*, and not of his state *after*, conversion. But the solution which our author so skilfully supplies to the perplexing passages in St. John, applies with equal force to the reasoning of St. Paul in the Romans: viz., that there dwell in the regenerate two natures—the old and the new,—and that the fiery conflict between these opposite natures continually wrings the plaintive cry from the believer, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Thus has our

author clearly shown that, while in the flesh of the regenerate there dwelleth no good thing, that evil is ever present with them, and that no Christian liveth and sinneth not,—yet, the 'holy seed' implanted in the regenerate—that holy thing begotten in them by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost,—cannot *per se* sin, because it is born of God,—it is not only incorrupted, but it is "*incorruptible* seed:" *i.e.*, it *cannot* be *corrupted*. Still, the true believer mourns over the existence and power and guilt of the sin that dwelleth in him; and is deeply conscious of the necessity of a continuous application of Christ's atoning blood; that, though all his sins, past, present, and to come, are entirely and for ever

put away, yet the travelled feet of his daily walk need repeated ablution in the laver of His Atonement: according to our Lord's expressive words, "He that is washed needeth not save *to wash his feet*, but is clean every whit."

Not wishing to expand these introductory remarks beyond a reasonable length, thus taxing the patience of the reader, anxious to peruse the volume itself, I will only advert to one other feature of this able treatise. I refer to the prominence given to the office of the HOLY SPIRIT, as the Divine AUTHOR of Regeneration. This may truly and emphatically be denominated, in the words of the Apostle, "the *present truth*," since it stands at the present time in direct anta-

gonism to the *opus operatum* system so popular and widespread. Honoured and blessed the pen employed in exposing and refuting heresies so fatal as the baptismal and sacramental theories, in vindicating and elucidating a doctrine so divine, essential, and precious as the work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration and renewing of man.

A Scriptural and logical statement of the FRUITS and EVIDENCES of spiritual Regeneration properly concludes this treatise; thus illustrating and enforcing the holy and practical influence of this all-essential and all-important truth. Other, more learned and elaborate treatises on the New Birth may have issued from the press; but I know of none that

surpass the present one in the Scriptural, lucid, and forcible manner in which this great doctrine of experimental and practical godliness is discussed, in the elegance of its diction, and the impressiveness of its appeals. Let those whose faith grasps with firmness and solemnity the great verity taught by the Saviour,—that, apart from the NEW BIRTH no soul can be saved,—feel it a personal and solemn duty to place this volume in the hands of all, over whom their influence may extend, who have not as yet, "PUT ON THE NEW MAN, WHICH AFTER GOD IS CREATED IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUE HOLINESS."

OCTAVIUS WINSLOW.

PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE

ON THE

NECESSITY FOR THE NEW BIRTH.

JOHN III. 7.

"Ye must be born again."

LIGHT and life, spiritual light and spiritual life, are the two fundamental gifts which every soul of man needs to receive, of which Christ is the author, and the Holy Ghost the instrument or agent. The conferring of this gift upon the soul of man, which is the Spirit's recognized office, whereby light and life are imparted, we call regeneration or the new birth. To this important fundamental truth I would direct your attention, as being an essential pre-requisite to the

salvation of every soul, according to the solemn words of our text, "Ye must be born again." May God the Holy Ghost be present to apply the word spoken, and to accomplish in many a heart His gracious offices at this time.

In order to form a just idea of the nature and importance of regeneration, we must first acquaint ourselves with man's unregenerate nature; must take correct, scriptural views of man, in his natural, carnal, unrenewed state. And though this be a familiar truth often before handled in this pulpit,* yet must I, like the householder, bring it forth out of my treasure, as one of those important old things which must never be lost sight of, and can hardly be too often dwelt upon.

As a direct consequence of Adam's fall,

* The following discourses were preached in St. Nicholas Church, during the winter of 1871.

the whole of man's spiritual nature became depraved, corrupted, perverted: that nature may for convenience be divided into two great departments,—first, the understanding; secondly, the affections and will: or in popular phraseology, the head and heart.

The figurative language of the Prophet gives a very graphic description of man's nature in that well-known passage, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores."

It will not do then, if we desire to arrive at a scriptural knowledge of the nature and extent of man's disease, to content ourselves with regarding him merely as a sinner, as very far gone from original righteousness. We must by no means overlook the important statements which the Word of God contains concerning the obliquity of his

spiritual vision, the ruinous state of his understanding, the depravity and corruption which have seized upon his intellectual and mental faculties, rendering him incapable of justly appreciating, correctly understanding, or savingly appropriating spiritual truth, when set before him. Nay, further, creating in his mind an aversion from, a distaste and hatred of Gospel verities, as being unpalatable and offensive to the carnality and God-hating propensities of his unenlightened intellect and unsanctified understanding.

The Apostle Paul, speaking of the unconverted Jews, tells us that "even unto this day, the veil is upon their heart;" and our Saviour, addressing His disciples, says: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." Whilst of others He testifies: "By hearing ye shall hear and not understand, and seeing ye shall see and not perceive;" which statements do precisely

harmonize with the experience of the Church of Christ from that day to the present, and account as nothing else can, for the various heresies, which have always abounded, for the erroneous notions of every kind constantly turning up, and however often refuted, being reproduced again and again, ever and anon seizing afresh upon the perverted understandings of unrenewed natures. It accounts, as nothing else can, for the marvellous superstitions which have prevailed, not merely in ages of darkness and amongst ignorant uneducated persons; but will explain the fact, which took the world by surprise a few years ago, that in this 19th century, graduates of our Universities, men of highly cultivated minds and extensive reading, bred up in the Protestant faith, could surrender at discretion to the Romish apostasy, and submit their understandings to the most puerile inventions of Popery

and the silliest old wives' fables, which used to be palmed off upon an ignorant world during the dark ages of mediæval superstition.

It accounts, as nothing else can, for the more recent manifestations in an opposite direction,—that drifting of numbers amongst us on to the shoals and quicksands of Socinianism and unbelief, which is nothing more nor less than the rejection of the distinctive features and most precious truths of the Gospel of Christ by the unconverted unrenewed intellect of man.

The disease of man's nature, however, is yet more subtle: not merely does it display itself in a strange appetency for error of every kind, the most opposite; not merely in the hard rejection of the leading doctrines of revealed truth,—such as the Trinity, the atonement and the like; but it is further manifested in the unprofitable manner in which

saving Gospel truth can be held; presenting the unseemly exhibition of a cold hard dry orthodoxy which exercises no influence over the heart; so that a man can strenuously contend for the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the atonement, whilst to the experimental testimony of our Lord, "Ye must be born again," or to that of the Apostle, "The love of Christ constraineth us," he remains insensible, or even entertains a strong aversion.

Then again, there is that blindness to the things of God which arises from an utter absence of spiritual perception and experience, rendering the soul unable to comprehend what the Word of God teaches in that department of Divine truth.

Now whilst few, if any, deny themselves to be sinners,—whilst all are ready more or less to acknowledge that their appetites are rebellious, their hearts sinful, and their lives

far from what they should be,—yet how few realize the blindness of their understanding, or seem to distrust their own natural powers of comprehending Divine truth.

To many a man who is confident in his assertions, and persistent in either receiving false doctrine or repudiating true, might one justly reply: "Vain man! what know you about the matter, and what is your opinion worth? You were born blind, and have never received sight. Your carelessness about religion and absorption in the world, your neglect of private prayer and the study of God's Word, your never having been under any anxious concern about your soul,—all forbid the hope that ever the Holy Ghost has taken of the things of Christ and shown them to you, has ever enlightened the eyes of your understanding or removed the vail from your heart, and therefore your opinions of the things of God are literally nothing

worth. You must go through a spiritual experience first: must go to the throne of grace for the pardon of your sins and the instruction of your soul, must have studied carefully and prayerfully God's Word, must have received the Holy Ghost,—before ever you can know the things of the kingdom, before ever your opinions on Divine truth can be worth a straw."

How seldom do we find men sufficiently modest to confess that their opinions are worth nothing, because they have never studied the Word of God in earnest, or sought for Divine enlightenment.

We have next to take a brief survey of the other department of man's nature: the affections and will.

The natural state of man's heart is thus described in the Word of God: "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God: they are all gone out of

the way." "Dead in trespasses and sins; alienated from the life of God."

Thus we see that the leading characteristic of man's nature is its utter deadness towards God. The unequivocal statements of Scripture on this head, are painfully borne out by experience. It is not exceeding the bounds of truth to assert, that at this present day in Christian England, with all the religious activity that abounds, the majority of the people are literally living without God in the world, completely dead in trespasses and sins, without the slightest consciousness of duty towards the great Creator of their being.

This native deadness, however, is not confined to such; all the spiritual diseases of man's nature are so subtle that they can never be expelled but by the renewing grace of God; wanting this, they do but shift their ground, and if driven from one

stronghold take refuge in some other. Thus we have numbers who do recognize God's claims, who go through the forms of religion and are even zealous after a fashion, who have never been quickened, but are dead.

This feature of man's disease is more palpable to the discernment of a spiritual mind, in an age of religious activity, like this, when natural men are prompted to take part in religious movements, and when a certain profession of religion has become fashionable; thus we see in many circles, that unseemly attempt to combine religion and the spirit of the world,—Church going and ball going, family worship and the race-course, the Lord's Supper and the hunting field, an atmosphere which ought to be full of life and love to Christ, and an atmosphere which is full of frivolity and redolent with the essence of this world's carnality and sin. Thus are we reminded how deceitful

the human heart is, by meeting with persons resting in the routine of an outward formalism with entire self-contentment, who have manifestly never been quickened and are still destitute of spiritual life.

These introductory remarks I have indulged in, more clearly and distinctly to set before you the absolute necessity of the new birth, of which nothing can be more convincing and expressive than the words of our Lord: "Ye must be born again." Also to enable you to realize what it is the soul requires in order to its new birth or regeneration.

These wants, as we have already seen, may be classed under two heads,—light and life. To impart this light, and to give this life to the soul of man, is the great office of the Holy Ghost. Let us trace this work of the Spirit of God on the heart of man, in reference to these particulars; and first of-

all, as the source of light. When God, entertaining purposes of mercy towards any soul, directs the Holy Spirit to perform a work of regenerating grace upon it, there is first that important part of the spiritual nature to be acted on, the understanding and the intellect. And here, I would remind you that the agency of the Holy Spirit in the enlightening of the understanding, is always in subordination to the Word of God. The true safe-guard against error lies herein: we would put the highest honour upon God's written Word and receive it not merely as the sole rule of faith and practice, but likewise as the exclusive material out of which the Spirit of God weaves that web of light wherewith it clothes the soul of a regenerate man.

That which the Holy Ghost has to accomplish, is to correct the obliquity of man's vision, not to furnish him with a new reve-

lation. A blind man came to Jesus: our Lord's miracle consisted not in changing the face of nature, nor in presenting new and strange landscapes to the man's eyes, but in opening those eyes which aforetime had been blind, so that at first he saw men as trees walking, and after that all things plainly and clearly on the face of nature.

Similar is the work of the Spirit upon the soul of man. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ,—which things are all in the Bible, and shows them to the soul; enables it to see, as it never saw before, the completeness, fulness, suitableness of Christ's redemption; how well qualified to satisfy all its spiritual wants and the cravings of its inmost nature.

Now this enchanting and beauteous landscape is all spread out in the Book of life. Why then do not the thousands who read or hear that Book, all see and rejoice in it? Simply because their eyes have never been

anointed with eyesalve that they might see. That native cataract which obscures the vision, that spiritual amaurosis which has dimmed and perverted the sight, renders them incapable of seeing and spiritually understanding Divine truth.

As the oculist has to administer in the course of his practice to a very great variety of diseases, to which that delicate organ the eye is subject, aiming in every case, however, to bring it to the same condition of clear, healthy, and distinct vision; so has the Spirit of God to deal with an endless variety of intellectual diseases and perversions of spiritual perception, out of all which divers and opposite conditions He has to bring the objects of Divine mercy, by the enlightening power of His grace, to the same clear spiritual eyesight. Whether it be out of the depths of Romish superstition, or from off the shoals and quicksands

of infidelity in all its various forms, whether it be out of a state of common ignorance, or of mere intellectual orthodoxy,—out of all these varying conditions does the Holy Ghost bring those whom God has ordained to eternal life; and applying an eyesalve suited to the varying wants of each individual, brings each to the same clear view of himself as a sinner, and Christ as the only and complete Saviour.

That which we contend for is the absolute necessity of a Divine work of the Holy Ghost upon man's understanding, to enable him to see spiritually and to appropriate savingly the blessed Gospel of the grace of God. It may be difficult to describe the nature of such vision, but he who has experienced it will never hesitate to testify of its reality and preciousness.

Contrasting his natural unenlightened condition with his subsequent spiritual per-

ceptions of Divine truth, when the Holy Ghost has been his teacher and has anointed his eyes with eyesalve, he finds no words better suited to describe his happy case than those of the man who was blind from his birth: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

Important as this process of spiritual enlightenment is, as an essential element in the regeneration of the soul of man by the Holy Ghost, another still more important gift remains to be received, before the soul can be transformed and transferred from a state of nature into a state of grace; and that is life,—spiritual life.

As we have already seen, the state of man by nature, is death,—spiritual death. He is dead in trespasses and sins; not merely as lying under the sentence of judicial condemnation,—but dead to God; his soul having no element or principle of

spiritual life in it. Hence the great fundamental office of the Spirit of God is to impart life. A process of quickening is essential. Thus testifies the Apostle: "You hath He quickened who were dead." And again, "You being dead, hath He quickened together with Christ." This state of spiritual deadness in which every soul by nature exists, is further illustrated by an expression well calculated to describe its character,—alienation of the heart from God. And it is by this form of words that the Apostle Paul frequently describes this the grand evil of man's unrenewed nature: "Being alienated from the life of God." "You were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind."

We have here the state of man's heart by nature truly depicted in the inspired oracles: they represent to us the universal experience of humanity, before the Spirit of God has

regenerated the soul. This alienation, however, may exist under many modifications, for there is subtilty in this disease also. We see it in all its native ugliness, naked and exposed, in the infidel, the profane, and the ungodly,—but not in them alone. We see it likewise frequently clothed in the fair garb of pietism and superstition, or in the cold cerements of formalism and wordly morality. Many a superstition is traceable to this fountain-head,—alienated from the life of God. And it is because the alienated heart cannot endure the vitality of real communion with God, because it neither knows nor loves the spiritual life, therefore it takes up with the counterfeit, the shadow, the bald semblance. It forms an important branch of ministerial faithfulness to probe the human heart, and to expose that common self-deceit which leads persons to imagine that they have been converted to

God, who have never experienced that essential quickening process, which we would term life from the dead.

What then is the remedy for this fatal disease? You have it from the lips of the great Physician Himself, in the words of our text: "Ye must be born again." A complete distinctive abiding transformation of the heart and nature of man from its original God-hating alienated condition must take place. To accomplish this is the peculiar office of the Holy Ghost; hence the being born again is immediately after called by our Lord, being "born of the Spirit." Its vitality as well as the greatness of the change, are both expressed by the words—a new birth.

Yes! my Christian brethren; this is a real work of the Spirit of God upon the soul. The new birth is not a mere figure, a vain dream, a phantasy, without evidence or

proof, erroneously supposed to be attached to or wrought by a sacrament; but a real change and transformation of the heart, a change so marvellous, a transformation so blessed, that words fail adequately to describe it: the strongest figures fall short of the reality. The new birth, life from the dead, a new creation, the new man, conversion, renewing, regeneration, transformation, quickening,—are some of the expressions by which the feebleness of language strives in vain to grasp the vast conception,—all of which are struggling to convey the strongest possible idea of the greatest possible change which the nature of man can undergo, so that the opposite extremes between the carnality of the old man and the spirituality of the new man, are wide as the poles asunder.

Now I desire to direct you practically to the Holy Spirit as the Author of this

spiritual life. Would to God that what I have said this day might lead some souls deeply to realize their need of conversion and renewal, of receiving a new nature from above, of being regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God. It is a gift from God, and can be received from no other source whatever. O! that the conviction of this truth might drive you to the throne of grace with this prayer on your lips,—"O! God, give me the Holy Spirit to convert and renew my heart!"

On that important and interesting branch of our subject, viz., the various modes of operation whereby the Spirit of God quickens dead souls, I can only very briefly touch. I shall confine myself to two distinctive results, as standing out prominently in the experience of true conversion. And these are,—first, convictions of sin; secondly, a saving reception of Christ into the soul by

faith. Whether these take place suddenly, and follow each other by rapid sequence, or whether they be of slow growth and gradual development, they are essential and vital.

Travailing in birth till Christ be formed in you, that which our hearts long and desire, is to see that the new birth be real, the change of heart and nature unmistakeable in you; that convictions of sin be sound, healthy, vigorous, and deep; that the reception of Christ into your hearts as a complete Saviour be a real transaction of your souls, conveying to them a sense of pardon, acceptance, and filial adoption into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

In commencing a work of grace upon the soul, the Holy Ghost employs an endless variety of means, so that probably not many have had the same experience throughout. Not unfrequently, however, when the

Spirit begins His gracious work, He does so by making the soul sick of the world, imparting to it a deep sense of the utter vanity of all those things in which it has hitherto rejoiced. Many a one who has had an overflowing cup of earthly happiness, not a wish ungratified, every thing the carnal heart could desire, has realized the utterly unsatisfying nature of all, and felt a void the world could never fill. This has led to seeking for something better: the first step in the right direction. At this stage nature prompts the soul to do works of righteousness in order to commend itself to God, which ofttimes gives rise to a process of ignorant asceticism, and leads to a long experience of disappointment, vexation, and distress, from finding its utter inability to keep the commandments. As the hopelessness of this attempt to work out its own salvation becomes more and

more manifest, always falling short, always resulting in the same disappointment and a constantly recurring sense of weakness and misery, convictions of sin increase and the soul begins to despair. This is a second stage of progress in its spiritual experience.

Whatever means the Holy Ghost may see fit to employ, the end aimed at is ever the same,—conviction of sin; so as to empty the sinner of himself, and to make him realize his own utter helplessness and inability to save himself. This conviction of sin can only be inwrought upon the soul by the Spirit of God; the most powerful arguments, the most lucid exhibition of Divine truth, the most fervent appeals to heart and conscience, all fail, till God the Holy Ghost takes the matter, as it were, into His own hands. When the soul has reached this stage of experience it is then

prepared for a saving reception of Christ by faith. And then it is that the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to it. Then does the weary soul, which has been so long trying to work out its own salvation, discover that whilst this is hopeless, it may be saved by the work of another and by the righteousness of another, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

When that precious declaration of Paul reaches the heart of one in such a state,—"By grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;" and when the eyes of the understanding have been opened so as to see "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ," as the only and all-sufficient source of justification for the sinner, then it is as though the veil had been rent asunder and a new wondrous vision presented to the soul. When by grace the sinner is

enabled to lay hold on this newly-revealed Saviour, so as to possess himself of His righteousness and to realize that he is now "justified from all things," it is impossible to describe the relief that follows, the freedom of spirit, the joy and peace experienced in believing, the transport which fills the soul, or the hallelujahs of praise and thanksgiving which now ascend to heaven from the heart of a sinner saved by grace.

Now all this is a distinct work of the Holy Ghost carried on in the soul. It is the Spirit who convinces of sin. It is the Spirit who takes of the things of Christ and shows them to the soul. In short, it is the Spirit who imparts both light and life, and in so doing, changes, transforms, and moulds anew the heart into the image of of Him that created him, making him a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Here we must close. But oh, my Christian brethren, let me impress upon your minds the solemnity of those words, "Ye must be born again." What issues for eternity hang upon them! Having heard from the Word of God wherein the new birth consists, can you rest content any longer without having experienced it: can you any longer be satisfied with yourselves as you are? I speak to some who must be conscious that they have never been regenerated by the Spirit of God. Oh, then listen, as men whose salvation is at stake, as men face to face with eternity, as men who realize the preciousness of their immortal souls! Act, I implore you, on the last piece of advice I shall give. Change entirely the character of your prayers, if pray at all you do; and begin henceforth, with persistent earnestness, to ask God to give you a new nature, to change your hearts, to regenerate your

souls, to make you new creatures in Christ Jesus, to give you the Holy Ghost, that you may be born again.

After this, go on to implore that God would reveal His Son in you, would enable you to close with the offers of salvation and to make them your own, would give you living appropriating faith, so that you may have assurance of your pardon and acceptance with God, through the distinctive testimony of the Spirit with your own spirit that you are a child of God.

Oh, if you would but persistently persevere in this course, what glorious and blessed fruits of the Spirit should we behold in this congregation! And of this, our house of God, it would be reported with joy in the heavenly courts, concerning many a one now in a state of nature's deadness and darkness,—that he was born here; and the Lord, when He writeth up the people, would

count that this man and that man were born here.

May such a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord be vouchsafed to us, that numbers of souls being regenerated by the Holy Ghost, there may be added to our Church daily such as shall be saved.

EVIDENCE OF REGENERATION.

No. I.

HOLINESS.

I JOHN III. 9, 10.

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God."

JOHN the Evangelist speaks very plainly in this Epistle concerning the great fundamental doctrine of the new birth. He handles it in a most practical way: writing to professed Christians, he spends no time in proving the doctrine, which he would have considered needless; but in the course of his letter he furnishes a variety of tests for self-examination, to those who professed to have been born again, in order to pre-

serve them from self-deception in a matter of such vital consequence.

Our text is the first of these proofs, which it is my purpose to bring before you in a series of discourses. Before entering upon so important a subject, let me invite your attention and ask you to make it a subject of prayer, that the word may be sanctified and blessed to many souls.

There are now a great many persons, I trust, in this congregation, who profess to have been born again, it is therefore a matter of much importance that they should be preserved against self-deception, by having their attention especially drawn to the signs of regeneration, so that they may be enabled to discover whether they have been born again or not; and if so, whether they are giving the signs and evidence of that new birth, so that there may be no mistake about the matter; for whilst there are some

who deceive themselves by fancying they have been born again when they have not; there are more perhaps, who, having been born again, fail in bringing forth as much fruit, and in giving as clear proof as could be desired; and who, by reason of their faulty tempers, worldly ways, and other infirmities, cause the ministers of Christ, who care for their souls, much anxiety,—compelling them to use the language of Paul to the Galatians: "I stand in doubt of you."

Our subject, therefore, is not the new birth, but the evidences of the new birth. Like John, I shall take the doctrine for granted, because you have had it so frequently expounded and so often set before you. And secondly, because like John I am addressing myself to those who profess, whether rightly or wrongly, to have experienced that grace, and to have been born again themselves.

The proposition before us is a very startling one: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin."

At first sight you might fancy that John was here broaching the doctrine of impeccability or perfectionism, and that he meant to teach perfect exemption from the power of sin in believers. There are those in modern times who have so perverted the passage before us, and some other isolated texts: a strange delusion which I need not spend time on refuting; one only wonders how any man can look into his own heart and be persuaded of it. The best preservative against such delusions is the comparing Scripture with Scripture. We have only to turn back to the 1st chapter of our Epistle, 8th verse, and we read, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Let me give you just one illustration of a similar kind. Our Lord, in the 14th chapter of St. Luke, 26th verse, says, "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." What! did our loving Saviour encourage feelings of enmity and hatred in His disciples towards their parents?" And how shall we reconcile this with the fifth commandment? We have only to turn to other passages of Scripture, and we find our Lord enunciating such doctrine as this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and again: "Love your enemies; do good to them which hate you."

It is clear then that our Lord did not mean to teach children to hate their parents. What then did He mean? Turn to the parallel passage, 10th of Matt. 37th verse,

and we read, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me."

In like manner we may ask,—Though it is clear John could not mean to teach that real Christians commit no sin, yet what did he mean? Now that meaning is manifest from the general tenor of Scripture, and the instruction I have to furnish you with turns upon it.

He meant to say that no person who has been born again can go on living in the habitual, unrestrained, commission of known sin.

And this is clear from the very nature of the case; for what is the new birth? It is a fundamental change in a man's nature, which transfers him from the service and power of Satan, and alters his affections and feelings, so that he has different instincts, affections, and desires, from what he had before. He has now become a loyal

subject of Jehovah, and hence desirous of rendering obedience to the laws of God. Again, all his feelings and affections are changed: things aforetime loved, he now hates; and things aforetime hated, he now loves. It is an essential principle of his new nature, therefore, to be at enmity with sin, and to love God and God's law, so as supremely to desire to fulfil it.

The reason of this is explained by John: he ascribes it to the new nature,—"for His seed"—that is the seed of God—"remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

Now compare this statement with the opinion held commonly by the world, and see how great the contrast. The nominal Christian does not recognise the necessity of the new birth,—of having a new nature implanted in him by the Spirit of God: hence the only distinction he makes between one

man and another is in regard to their conduct: a sober, industrious, benevolent person is a good man,—one destitute of such qualities, is a bad man; but to become the good man no inward change of nature is needed, only he must mend his ways. In reply to this, we would put the pertinent and pungent question of the prophet: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

In a highly civilized state of society, and with a very low standard of religion, this does not strike men's minds as it otherwise would, for we have amongst us a great many very honourable, upright, and benevolent citizens, who unquestionably have never been born again; for much of what they have, they are, without doubt, indebted to the reflex influence of Christianity; but if you could get access to the inner chambers

of their hearts, and ascertain how it stands between them and God,—what are their affections towards Him, what the nature of their prayers, and so forth,—you would then discover that there was a broad gulf indeed, between the regenerate and the unregenerate man.

I am desirous, therefore, of impressing upon your minds deeply, this great fundamental truth of Scripture,—that the origin of vital spiritual religion in the soul of man, is to be traced up to God's implanting His own seed in that man; in other words, in giving him a new nature: he is born of God. Peter preaches precisely the same doctrine. His description of a Christian is,—"being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God." Here we have the seed, and the new birth precisely as in our text; but we have one thing more,—what may be termed the agent employed by

God for planting this seed, and accomplishing this new birth: it is by the Word of God. "And this is the Word, which by the Gospel, is preached unto you."

Thus the Word of God—the truths contained in our Bible—is the agent in God's hand of regenerating souls. Never, since our Lord came, has any soul been regenerated which was a stranger to God's Word, and had neither read nor heard the truths of the Gospel; for it is this Gospel, these glad tidings of a Saviour's love, which reaches the sinner's heart, and through the agency of the Spirit changes that heart and nature. Now observe the argument of John: "he cannot sin, because he is born of God." You see here a complete antagonism between sin and the new nature. You also see the permanency of the change. It is not off and on: but if a new nature has been imparted, it remains. The seed is incorrup-

tible, and that seed abideth in him who is begotten of God, for ever: "His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God."

Our Evangelist repeats the same doctrine in the 5th chapter, 18th verse: where he says, "We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Let me give you a brief quotation on this subject from a small volume which I would commend to your study: Bonar's "Way of Holiness." He, with great force and much truth, says:—

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. This cannot mean that a man, once born again, never commits sin; in that case there is no Christian upon earth. The Apostle takes for granted that the Christian does commit sin, nay, that he cannot say he has no sin without making God a liar, and showing that the truth is not in him. He means to affirm that the being born of God, is the only way of deliverance from sin, and that holiness is the true and natural result of being born of God.

"There are many passages which show that 'cannot' often means, not that the thing does not or might not occur, but that its occurrence is wholly contrary to the nature of things. Thus 'a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit;' that is, it is contrary to its nature to do so, though sometimes it does. 'While the Bridegroom is with them they cannot fast;' that is, it would be unnatural."

There is another interpretation, however, of the words of our text, which strongly commends itself to my own judgment: viz., that John in this passage confines his statement to the new-born nature of the regenerate man. He elsewhere says, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world:" that is to say, whatsoever there is of Divine grace in the regenerate man, whatsoever there is of the new nature, whatsoever there is that is born of God, *that*, overcometh the world.

Now if John had used the same form of expression in our text and said, "*Whatsoever* is born of God doth not commit sin," it

would in like manner have been easy to understand that he meant, whatsoever there is of Divine grace, whatsoever there is of the new nature in the regenerate man, doth not commit sin. And this is a statement thoroughly borne out by Scripture. The Apostle Paul distinctly affirms that the new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness. Hence as a logical necessity, this new, this Divine nature in the regenerate man cannot sin. But within this regenerate man are, so to speak, two men, —the old man and the new man: it is of the new man only that the statement of John holds good,—"he sinneth not;" whilst the old man, which is essentially corrupt and prone to sin, is constantly chafing under the restraints of the new man, and all the sin committed by the regenerate is done by the old man and not by the new. Hence the inner spiritual conflict with which every

true child of God is familiar by daily experience.

Now if we suppose that John in our text is personifying the new nature, the argument is complete. Such personification is a common form of speech in Scripture. When Paul calls the corrupt element, the carnal nature, "the old man," he personifies it; and when he speaks of the Divine nature, the new creation, as "the new man," what is this but personifying it? Thus it would seem that when John speaks of the whole nature of man, he describes it as sinful: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;" because that whole nature includes the old man. But when he speaks exclusively of the new nature, then of it he says, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not." Meaning unquestionably, the "born of God element" within the man exclusively.

I hope I have now made it abundantly clear that the man in whom the seed of God is, and who has been born of God, is one in whom must be found the following qualities: first, thorough loyalty to Jehovah; secondly, deep reverence and affection for God's law, which is the embodiment and outward expression of the will of his heavenly Father, whom to love, serve, honour and obey, has now become the passion of his remaining days; and thirdly, stern hatred of sin, which is the transgression of the law, and that abominable thing which God hates.

These principles are native instincts in him who has been really and thoroughly born again. It is not necessary that he should argue them out, or study them; they spring up as part of his new nature, or rather they are the spontaneous actings of that new nature. Now it is when we cannot see the vigorous acting of such principles in the

life of those who profess to have been born again, that we are oppressed with anxiety. It is when we see things quite irreconcilable therewith, that we are compelled like Paul to utter the mournful complaint: "I stand in doubt of you."

I want to elevate the standard of holiness, and to make you realize that as the Christian is the noblest style of man, so is he, who has been born again, far exalted above other men, and that there are in him certain things by reason of which he is much superior to other men. In the first place, he has within him a Divine nature which other men have not; this Divine nature has imparted to him new principles and affections of a very high order, and which if possessed perfectly by all men would transform this moral lazar-house, or hospital of diseased men and women, as our world now is, into a second

paradise, a garden of delights; for amongst the new principles developed by the new nature are love to God and love to man.

And thus I want to make you see and feel that a man ought to be ashamed to call himself a Christian, or to make any profession of religion, who is not conscious of having experienced a change of nature, and who is not giving proof to the world, in his life and conversation, of being influenced by higher motives and purer principles than the men of the world by whom he is surrounded, or than he himself was previous to his regeneration. Oh, what injury is done to the cause of Christ by the inconsistent conduct and unchristian actions of those who make a profession of religion! It is impossible for us to draw the line now, we are unable to discern how much infirmity is compatible with a man's being a Christian at all; but I am strongly convinced that of

that where the work of regeneration is real and thorough, it produces a man infinitely higher in all his relations to God and man, and a life far holier and more exalted, than the life of an unregenerate man can be,—making all allowance for the genial temperament, good education, high moral sense, and many other excellent qualities, compatible with a man's remaining in his natural state.

Therefore would I stimulate you to look inwards, and each one to ask himself, "Is it possible that a work of grace can have taken place in my heart? The inspired Evangelist says, 'Whosoever is born of God

us from the temptations of Satan. With these the regenerate have to contend until life's latest hour. That which is born of the flesh remaineth flesh until this corruption shall put on incorruption. Notwithstanding, it is a blessed and glorious deliverance and disenthralment which grace achieves. It is a deliverance from sin's guilt, condemnation, and reign; it is a disenthralment from Satan's dominion, rule, and power.—"Born Again," *by the Rev. Dr. Winslow.*

doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' And though I know by comparing this Word with other parts of Scripture, that John did not mean to say that he who is born again is perfectly free from sin,—and though I know (to use the words of our Scriptural Articles) that the infection of our original nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerate, —yet am I fully convinced that the words of John cannot imply anything less than a very high standard of holiness: that to live in habitual sin, to give way ever and anon to my corrupt and carnal propensities, to be destitute of true allegiance to God, sincere love to His law, and strong hatred of sin, is quite incompatible with regeneration or the new birth ; and did not our Lord say, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'? Now then,

these things being so, am I born again or am I not?"

This pungent, all-important question I leave for you to solve; but you must do it, first, by being thoroughly honest with yourself. As the matter lies between you and your God, whom you cannot deceive, be not so foolish as to try to deceive yourself; no good can come from this, but infinite ruin and loss.

In the next place, take the Word of God for your guide, searching your heart and life in connection therewith.

And, lastly, go to the throne of grace for divine enlightenment. Doing this, I doubt not the day will come when you shall be able to face our text without fear or trembling. God grant it may be so, for Christ's sake.

EVIDENCE OF REGENERATION.

No. II.

LOVE.

1 JOHN IV. 7.

"Every one that loveth is born of God."

SUCH is the second proof of the new birth adduced by John. The same style pervades this Epistle: it is a style of what may be termed sweeping assertions. I use the term of course not in any offensive sense; but it would seem as if John,—whether because his mind was so full of his subject, or his heart so full of love,—could not stop to make nice distinctions. We noticed this peculiarity on a former occasion, where we found the Evangelist putting forth the broad assertion, "Whosoever is born of

God doth not commit sin," though he had just before stated, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves." Nevertheless he stays not to explain or reconcile the apparent inconsistency, but leaves that to the common-sense of his readers.

So here he makes the broad assertion: "Every one that loveth is born of God," which if taken without limitation, might lead to much self-deception; for does not a mother, by nature, and without the aid of regeneration, love her own children; and our Lord says, "Sinners love those that love them." It must be admitted then, that sentiments of affection may go forth from the heart, even though that heart be entirely unregenerate; and that sinners, persons in a state of nature, who have never been born again, may love others with tender, warm and even passionate affection.

For all this, it holds good that love is a

sign of the new birth; and the absence of it a proof that the new birth has not taken place. And for this reason,—love in the heart of a regenerate man is a very different thing from that which a natural man entertains. As we have seen, love is an affection compatible with the unregenerate nature of the natural man,—but then its outgoings for the most part are confined to those whom nature prompts us to love. It can rise no higher than its source. Whereas Christian love is acting under the promptings of the new nature, and is under the influence of the high purifying self-denying motives of the Gospel. Now there are two kinds of love which are peculiar to the real Christian, which the nominal Christian has not, and which are hence signs and proofs of the new-birth. These two kinds of love moreover are developed and kept in active exercise by two motives or feelings which neither

those who have dishonoured Christ by their inconsistent lives, it will be found at the last day, that the great majority had not really been born of God, and that their religious impressions had belonged to that class, which are compatible with a man's remaining in his natural state.

Now all that I have said is quite consistent with another great truth, which forms part of the experience of the new man: viz., the remaining power of the old man, in him who has become a new man. To quote the words of our ninth Article, speaking of the original corruption of man's nature: "This infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek *φρόνημα σαρκὸς*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God."

Hence, as Paul instructs us in the seventh of Romans, in the same man are to be found two opposite principles: the remains of the old partially subdued nature, which is enmity to God, hatred of His law, disobedience to it,—and the new nature, Divine in origin, instinct with life, which is loyal to God, loves His law, and renders sedulous obedience to it. Hence that spiritual warfare, which commences as soon as a man is born again, and results in progressive triumphs over the old man as he becomes more and more subdued, until the final triumph in glory. Do not for a moment suppose, therefore, that I would represent the condition of a new-born soul to be that of a perfect man, free from infirmities, falls, and sins,* far from it; but this I contend,

* Deliverance from the power of Satan and the corruption of sin in the new birth, is not such a deliverance as totally frees us from the indwelling of sin, or entirely emancipates

himself washed. And hence, looking out upon the world, he sees what the nominal Christian, the unregenerate man never sees, —a world of unwashed souls, a world of lost sinners, a world of people for whom Christ died, but who are unwilling to be saved by Him:—some living in open sin, some in secret, some living exclusively for this world, whether its riches, honours, pleasures, or follies, but all out of Christ, unsaved. There is nothing more melancholy or painful than to walk through a great crowd and reflect how few of those men and women around one are in Christ, and saved souls; unless it be the further thought, how hard, how difficult, to get access to them.

Now, sentiments of love go forth from the real Christian towards mankind at large, under the influence of the love of Christ, prompting to efforts for their good, to which the world is an entire stranger. I

have admitted that unrenewed nature, under the reflex influence of Christianity, may entertain some feelings of disinterested regard and benevolence towards their fellow-men; but I must limit this admission. For the most part, men are exceedingly selfish till they become real Christians; for the most part, till then their contributions are mean and paltry in the extreme; for the most part, they are very unwilling to give themselves any trouble or to go out of their way to do good. If there be any sparks of benevolence in them, they lie dead and concealed beneath the heavy weight of superincumbent selfishness and worldliness. Their benevolence is passive, not active; they must be solicited to give, and ofttimes their gift is prompted by no higher motive than that of the unjust judge.

Thus, notwithstanding the admissions I have made, the irreligious world is very sel-

fish, self-indulgent, and uncharitable. What care they for the souls of the heathen? When were they ever found ministering by the bed-side of the sick and the dying?

In contrast herewith, love is the unvarying result of the new birth. Every one that loveth is born of God. Reverse the proposition: every one that is born of God, loveth.

There is however another kind of love peculiar to the real Christian, of which the world knows nothing. This is the love of fellow-believers,—a love which springs from Christian experience.

A real Christian is a person who has been adopted into the family of God, and who has experienced a work of grace upon his soul, transforming it and making all things new.

Allegiance to God, and deep affection to the Lord Jesus Christ for all His benefits,

are distinguishing features of that work of grace. The consequence of this is an outgoing of his heart and affection toward those who have undergone a similar experience, and who love the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a sort of freemasonry: there is a common bond; their hearts beat in unison; their affections are concentrated on the same objects; and the Lord Jesus Christ forms the Sun and centre of their system, around which they do obeisance, like the sheaves in Joseph's dream.

Thus do their hearts go out towards each other with a peculiar spiritual affection, which the world cannot experience, and is confined to those who have been born of God.

You will observe that the motive which produces this love differs from the former; though they have this in common,—that they both owe their origin to the love of Christ;

but whereas the Christian's love to mankind at large springs from sentiments of pity and compassion, prompted by the love of Christ, —this love, the love of the brethren, springs from fellowship and communion; from seeing the reflection of the Father's face in the new-born soul.

Thus you will find real Christians, who widely differ in circumstances, in education, in social position, in natural temperament, drawing to each other and loving one another; because they both love Christ, have both had the same experience, and understand each other as none else can. Still further, you will see that bond unbroken, and much forbearance exercised, when human infirmity, natural defects of character, the cropping up of unsubdued tempers, and other remaining corruptions of the old man would otherwise have utterly severed the bond.

Paul gave expression to this feeling of love and affection for fellow-believers as such, when he sent salutations like these: "Peace be to the brethren;" "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." And Peter: "Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity;" "Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus."

The Epistle of Paul to Philemon abounds in such sentiments: "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers;" "Hearing of thy love and faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;" "For we have great joy and consolation in thy love;" and many other like passages.

I have now to touch upon a very painful subject, which has been, I believe, in every age the chief source of a Christian minister's disappointment and sorrow. And this I

would define as the loss of love in those who profess to have been born of God.

Whenever a person separates himself from the world and cleaves to Christ, giving signs of true repentance, living faith, and other fruits of the Spirit, it is the joy of a Christian minister's heart, whether this be traced to the direct influence of his own ministry, or to other agencies besides his own. The source of his joy is this,—that another soul has been gathered into the fold of Christ. What consolation it is to see the work of the Spirit producing such gracious results; and as no man born of God liveth to himself, there is also the widening circle of influence for good to rejoice in, which this new-born agency brings into existence.

Such are amongst the cheering fruits of a Gospel ministry, just in proportion as the Spirit of God renders it effectual over the hearts and consciences of men. Blest with

such happy results of his ministry as few, if any, ever were, Paul exultingly exclaims, when writing to the Thessalonians, "What is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? for ye are our glory and joy."

But even Paul was doomed to disappointments amongst those whom he had gathered in from the heathen or the Jews. Of one such he is obliged in sorrowful accents to complain: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." To others he was obliged to write, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." To the Corinthians he wrote, "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal." And he found it necessary to use such strong language as this: "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is

called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no, not to eat."

It seems then that from the beginning it has ever been so,—that whilst the Gospel of Christ regenerates and purifies man's heart, and is a real life-giving power, yet there are cases in which it seems to fail; not that it really does, but because those whom we supposed to have been born again never were so; and as our Lord says of such, "These in time of temptation fall away." This serves to explain many glaring cases of apostasy, such as that of Demas. But there are others who greatly disappoint the hopes excited by their first promise, who are guilty of conduct very inconsistent with their Christian profession; and yet we dare not class them with the Demases, Annanias and Sapphiras of Scripture, but still hope that there is a root of grace in them,

though their fruit be blasted as with an east wind.

This is a very large subject; but our text only requires that I should touch upon one branch of it: viz., the want of love displayed by some who claim to have been born again, and who make a marked profession of religion.

When a society of Christian persons is in a truly healthy state, it represents a beautiful picture,—a kind of oasis of refreshing verdure in the sandy desert of this evil world.

We will suppose them united in the same congregation, attending on the same ministry, hearing the same message of the Gospel, breaking bread at the same table, engaged in the same good works,—whether, like Dorcas, in preparing garments for the poor, or in the labours of a Sunday-school, or in some other department of Christian benevo-

lence and love. Their hearts are united in the same bonds of a common Gospel: the love of Christ constrains them, and they rejoice in sweet communion, as brethren and sisters in Christ. Alas, that ever Satan should get access to such a holy and pure company as this! Alas, that ever the remnants of native corruption should destroy the harmony of such a happy family, or sow seeds of discord amongst those who are so united! Yet so it is.

Again: family feuds are not always confined to ungodly or worldly households. Misunderstandings spring up and alienations take place in families professing godliness, —to the great scandal of religion, and the weakening of the hands of those who are labouring for Christ.

This was one of the grounds of complaint which Paul had against the Corinthians, who at one time represented such a happy

and united band of Christ's followers as I have just described. Says he, "It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, that there are contentions among you." And again: "Ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"—that is, as unconverted men, men of the world, natural men.

Now, this is a very humiliating experience; but Paul had to endure it, and every faithful minister of Christ has had more or less experience of it since his day. I wish therefore to trace to its fountain-head this stream of bitter waters, and to inquire how it comes to pass that persons, who we hoped by other signs had been born of God, should be at times and towards particular individuals so deficient in that prime grace of love. How does it happen that there should ever be envyings, strife, and divisions

amongst those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and who are united in the same bonds of a common Gospel?

1. The first cause I believe to be this. Selfishness, that root of bitterness in the human heart, has not been extracted or subdued. To pull it up by the roots and throw it away, so that none remains, is perhaps an attainment rarely, if ever, accomplished in this life; but to cut it down, root and branch, and as it springs up again and again, to keep trampling it under foot and subduing it, is a part of true Christian practice. Now, then, if after the first energies of religious warmth are somewhat expended, you relax your efforts, and allow this Upas tree of nature to spring up and bud and put forth its poisonous leaves, the result will be just what we complain of,—a loss of Christian love, and many other evils besides.

2. The next defect of Christian character, to which I would trace loss of love and the development of those grave faults under consideration, is want of humility. Next to love, humility is the choicest Christian grace. When a person thinks a great deal of himself—and, alas, how many do so, without seeming to be conscious of it!—he becomes self-sufficient, touchy, self-important; and if any one fails to pay him that due respect to which he considers himself entitled, or says a word to disparage either his character or conduct, he fires up at once, and is full of indignation and offended pride; feelings of enmity and dislike are generated in his mind toward the offending party, which ofttimes result in quarrels, bickerings, and other evils.

Now, true humility would have prevented all this; a really humble mind is conscious of its own unworthiness; and nothing gives

a man such a humbling insight to his own character as the Gospel: for in the perfection of the law he sees, as in a glass, his own vileness; and at the cross of Christ he learns to renounce all his own righteousness. Even though the charges in question may be entirely untrue, yet he can bear them patiently, knowing how unworthy he is, and having learnt lessons of humility in the school of his Lord and Master, the meek and lowly Jesus.

Closely allied to this grace of humility is meekness; which further aids a man in the exercise of patience, forbearance, and long-suffering, under injuries and provocation.

3. The third cause of a loss of love I trace up to the tongue. The Apostle James, writing not to unconverted men and women, but to the Christian Church, at a time when

it was far purer than it now is, considers it expedient thus to describe the human tongue, and to warn them against its evils: "The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell."

I cannot use stronger language than this. To the tongue may be traced half the misunderstandings which separate members of the same family,—much of the unkindly feeling that springs up amongst professing Christians. I would therefore warn you to be on your guard against circulating unfriendly reports, giving credit to idle rumours; for there is nothing which gets so soon distorted as a statement passed from mouth to mouth, till the small residuum of truth it may

have contained is overlaid with flagrant exaggeration and falsehood.

There is a love for tittle-tattle, for brooding over offences, for talking and complaining about them to others, which all tends to evil. Up to this source you may trace half the quarrels, bickerings, jealousies, envyings, alienations, unkindness, and enmity, which disgrace society. Aim then to control the tongue; and bear in mind the Apostle's solemn warning: "How great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

4. The fourth cause of the evil we are investigating, which is the last I shall produce, is temper.

It is a melancholy fact,—how common a bad temper is! This is frequently hereditary, like many other diseases. Till true religion takes hold of a man's heart, he often remains ignorant of this fault, so glaring to

others, but whether or not, he makes no effort to subdue it. Hence it grows by what it feeds on. One of the results of a work of grace upon the soul is, it makes a man know himself, and gives him a deep insight to his sinful nature. He is now by grace furnished with new power from on high, which stimulates him to wage war upon his faults and sins; he now watches against them, reproves himself when they recur, and wrestles with God in prayer for strength to overcome them.

A bad temper is a sad inheritance, but many a man under the power of Divine grace has succeeded in mastering it. This is one of the triumphs of the Gospel of the grace of God. Self-government and self-control form a prominent element in the Christian life. How is it then, that not every one is equally successful, and that we have so often to mourn over the hu-

miliating inconsistency of professors of religion, who egregiously fail in governing their tempers, and seem to be little, if any better, in this important particular, than they were before they made a profession of religion. We can only account for it by the fact that they do not try; they have not realized this as one of the most important duties of the Christian life; they have failed to see themselves as they are, to be alive to their sad infirmity, and they have never grappled with it. Hence they make no progress in subduing that element of their carnal nature, which is a curse both to themselves and all with whom they have to do.

It is a singular thing, how exacting we are in regard to the conduct of others. It would almost seem as if we considered ourselves entitled to expect perfection in them, whilst we claim the right to be as

full of infirmity ourselves as we please. Does any one say an unkind word of us, is any one's temper short and sharp, or his conduct marked by self-sufficiency, assumption, or rudeness, are we unjustly or severely reproved? In each and every case, we seem entitled to consider ourselves badly used, and justified in resenting the treatment we have received, either by angry words, illnatured returns, or sullen obstinacy. So did not our blessed Lord, for "when He was reviled He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not, but committeth Himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

So did not Peter, for he exhorts the brethren, "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing." So did not Paul, for he says, "See that none render evil for evil

unto any man. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another. Bless them which persecute you, bless and curse not. Recompense to no man evil for evil. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." What sublime morality is this! Why is it not more practised by professing Christians?

We may well ask,—Are we so perfect ourselves as never to utter an unkind word, never to be short or sharp in our own temper, never to be rude or self-sufficient, never to be unkind or severe? In short, do we not daily stand in need of forbearance from others for our own short comings? Why then are we to be so touchy and sensitive and so easily offended when we come in contact with the infirmities of others? Most persons seem to limit their

love to those who love them, and to consider themselves justified in acting after a most unchristian fashion, when smarting under any injury, insult, or offence; hence the use of violent language, coarse and rude rejoinders; hence the excitement of feelings akin to hatred and enmity.

Hear now what our Lord says. Oh, how great the contrast! "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" What I desire earnestly to impress upon your minds is this,—that Christian love should display itself, not merely towards those who love us, but more especially towards those who do not. It is not till some evil has begun to crop up, some offence been given, some

misunderstanding has occurred, some quarrel has taken place, or some evil speaking been uttered, that the Christian has the opportunity of proving the superiority of his religion over that of the world, by producing the following fruits of the Spirit,—love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, which last signifies self-control.

I have left myself no time for application, but the subject hardly needs it. I trust there has been a self-application going on in each heart all the while. Take home with you then our text, and its converse, engraven on your hearts, and make further application in your closets and at the throne of grace. "Every one that loveth is born of God:" every one that is born of God, loveth.

EVIDENCE OF REGENERATION.

No. III.

FAITH.

I JOHN V. 1.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

OUR text is the third proof of the new birth; it is couched in the same form of strong assertion, untrammelled by explanations, which characterized the other passages recently under our consideration. I think, however, that when we have carefully weighed the Apostle's words, we shall find them fully borne out by the general tenour of Scripture. The signification of the passage turns upon two clauses in the text: first, What is meant by believing? secondly, What is meant by believing that Jesus is the Christ?

For instance, if John meant by believing, merely an opinion, or an intellectual reception of a given statement as true, then his assertion would be very far from correct, and would imply that a great many persons had been born of God, who never had. Such to a great extent, however, is the notion which the world has of faith. They have no idea of any element in faith beyond their own unaided mental powers. The sluggish hereditary convictions of those who have never cared anything for religion, are to such persons, faith. Even very much superior convictions to these do not rise to the Scriptural standard of faith; for a man may be well versed in Scripture, may have studied the evidences of Christianity very carefully, may be fully persuaded of its historical truth, and yet be a stranger to true and living faith.

If we leave the Divine element out of

faith, unquestionably the proposition of our text would lead us to false conclusions; for a person may be a believer in the Christian religion, never having had his mind darkened by any doubts, and yet give such unmistakeable signs of the entire absence of regeneration, as to make it clear to demonstration, that, of such faith as he possesses, it cannot safely be asserted that it is a sign of the new birth. The vindication of the Apostle however is very easy: this is not the kind of faith John meant, he never would have dignified it by such a title. Like the other Apostles, he recognizes faith as having a Divine element in it. John had recorded our Lord's own words, and now thoroughly understood them. "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." And he knew that believing and coming to Christ were the same thing.

What an important view does this give us of the nature of faith, and what ground for alarm does it furnish to many, who never dream but what they are believers in Christ, and yet cannot produce any evidence of their having been born of God. When we consider that saving faith is the direct consequence of the operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul, and results not merely in convincing the understanding, but likewise in changing the heart, that it is possessed of a life-giving creative power, making all things new within the soul, it is very easy to see how impossible it is that such a process as this can be accomplished within the soul, independently of the new birth, for such believing forms in truth its very staple, —that of which the new birth consists.

John, however, does not confine himself to the general assertion, "Whosoever believeth is born of God;" but he enlarges the propo-

sition, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Now this form of expression might lead one to suppose that nothing more was included in this assertion, than the existence of that kind of historical intellectual faith, which we have already described. Under such a supposition, however, it would be very difficult, nay impossible, to explain how it is that thousands have such a misnamed faith, who have not been born of God, and that such an intellectual, hereditary, or historical faith, never acts upon the heart at all, and leaves the man unchanged. I shall therefore proceed to show that believing that Jesus is the Christ is quite a different thing from this, and does in fact embody the very essence of saving faith.

The proposition of our text is, that Jesus is the Christ; and the question for solution, What does this proposition involve? That

such a Person as Jesus had lived, and was put to death upon the cross on Calvary, was a truth which hardly required faith at the time John lived; for it was of such recent occurrence, general notoriety, and ordinary character, as to call for no special effort of faith.

Very different, however, was the proposition;—this Jesus is the Messiah. The Jews had long been expecting a mysterious person, whose advent they looked for under the name of Messiah, or Christ, the Anointed One. Anointing with oil was the process in ancient times of appointing to office. The term Messiah, therefore, meant a person appointed by God, and the office was that of a Saviour. The Jews, in their carnality, made two great mistakes: first, this salvation they supposed to be temporal,—a deliverance from the power of the Romans; national exaltation and triumph;

and secondly, they confined it to themselves. Nevertheless, they looked for this mighty Saviour, whom their Prophets had described in such sublime language as "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Now Jesus had distinctly during His ministry professed Himself to be this wonderful Person, the Messiah who had been foretold. He laid claim to the very highest dignity and authority whilst walking Judæa in humblest mien, and at length He sealed His testimony to His own divinity as a martyr on the cross.

To believe, then, that Jesus is the Christ is to recognize Him as the fulfilment of all those prophecies from Genesis to Malachi, the first of which in Paradise runs thus: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou

shalt bruise his heel." And the last, four hundred years before His advent, testified: "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings."

What a body of testimony is there in the Old Testament between these two, the first and the last prophecy, to the nature, character, and office, the life and death, of the Messiah, all proving that Jesus is the Christ! The first element of our faith, then, consists in our receiving this Jesus as the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament. But this faith is not a dry creed,—a simple conviction of the understanding, based upon the evidence of prophecy and miracles: it is a faith which enters the very recesses of the soul, and reaches the inmost springs of our nature; for it involves everything which can possibly affect the interests of the soul. It is intimately connected with the dis-

covery, as also revealed in the Word, and confirmed by experience, of the guilt, ruin, and condemnation of our souls by reason of sin. And the believing that Jesus is the Christ is a conviction, that this Jesus, whom the Jews slew and hanged on a tree, hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.

See what an important personal element is here introduced, in connection with the Messiahship of Jesus. There is ascribed to Him power and virtue to forgive sins. Into what close and intimate relation does this bring us to Jesus. We are sinners: Christ a Saviour from sins. The whole plan of salvation is thus essentially, intimately, and inseparably interwoven with the great central truth that Jesus is the Christ.

Now I am quite willing to admit that all this may be held by a person who has never

been born of God. A sound, candid, unprejudiced mind may study the Scriptures, and arrive at a firm conviction that Jesus is the Christ, and receive the leading truths concerning Him, so as to recognize the fall, the ruin, and condemnation of man, the atonement made on the cross for sin, the free offers of salvation to all that believe. And yet this man may not have been born of God! How is this? How do we reconcile this with our text: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God"?

The answer is simply this: the Scriptures do not recognize such intellectual convictions, separate from a work of grace on the soul, as faith at all. When the breath is out of a man, we no longer call him a man, but a corpse; for a man is a living creature, —the mysterious union of body and soul. In like manner, James refuses to call that faith, which has no breath or life in it; and

for the same reason,—because it "is dead, being alone."

I proceed, then, to draw the distinction between such faith as we have above described, though it be not entitled to the name, and true living faith,—that kind of believing that Jesus is the Christ, which John meant when he inseparably connected it with the new birth. And this I shall do by introducing the Divine element,—by tracing faith up to God as its origin.

Our Lord testified, "No man can come unto Me, except it were given him of the Father," and He quotes Isaiah in support of this proposition: "They shall be all taught of God;" from which He draws the following conclusion: "Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." We here trace faith, in the soul of man, up to its originating source, the will of God; and we see Him taking steps to

create this faith in the sinner's soul. The Father must draw the man before that man can come to Christ; it must be given him by the Father to come unto Christ, in order to which he must be taught of God.

Thus clearly do the Scriptures introduce the Divine element in connection with faith. "Unto you," says Paul, "it is given on the behalf of Christ, to believe on Him." We also see the life-giving character of this faith, as distinguished from a human faith,—for not only is God its author, originating it within the soul, but He also gives that soul new life: there is action on the part of God upon the man, for the Father draws him.

Let us now trace the results of this Divine work upon the soul in connection with faith. And, to make the contrast the more striking, we will take the case of such a man as has already been described, who is possessed of all those elements of faith, which nature can

furnish. He is well versed in the Scriptures, is fully persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, and has embraced with his understanding the orthodox doctrines of Christianity. We do not often come across such cases, for gross ignorance, imperfect knowledge, or unsound opinions, much more frequently characterize unconverted men. But taking this most favourable case, what do we find?—A spiritual corpse. Revert to Ezekiel's vision of dry bones. He saw in the valley dry bones: but by and by these bones came together, bone to his bone, then the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them. Thus were the bodies perfect: yet only corpses, for there was no breath in them.

Such is a correct description of the faith of a natural man, as far as it is sound and Scriptural, though there be much which no natural man can receive of the things of

God; but taking the faith of this unrenewed man, so far as it goes, and so far as it is sound, what does it resemble so much as a dead corpse? For as the prophet said, "There is no breath in it." What has it done for the man, has it brought him to Christ? No! for our Lord has said, "No man can come to Me except the Father draw him." Has it convinced him of sin, of righteousness, of judgment? No! because this is the office of the Holy Ghost. When He is come, He will do these things in the soul; but not having yet come to this man's soul, no such results have taken place there.

Suppose now, that God by His Spirit does come to such a man as this; see what a change takes place within. He has not to be evangelized in the sense in which a Hottentot must be, who has never heard of Christ; but the same great change must take place in his heart, which is needed in

the Hottentot's; for of both it holds good —"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This new birth is now beginning in the case of the man whose orthodox dead faith we have been considering, and the work of regeneration is traceable by its imparting to him a living, life-giving, working faith, instead of that bundle of dead worthless opinions, which though true, did aforetime exercise no influence on his heart and life. In short God has breathed into this corpse the breath of life, and he has become a living soul. The man now believes that Jesus is the Christ, to some purpose, for the convictions of sin which have pierced his soul have brought him to the foot of the cross, there to seek and find pardon, peace, and eternal life. The reason is, the Holy Ghost has now convinced him. The Father now has drawn him. Hence he has believed, not with the

head only but with the heart likewise; as the Apostle testified, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness."

Every thing connected with the nature, character, and office of Christ, is now instinct with reality, life, and power in His soul, and whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, in this way and in this sense, is unquestionably born of God. Neither is there any other kind of believing which the Scriptures recognize as entitled to the name,—though there be many and diverse kinds which lay claim to it.

Thus have we clearly proved the truth of the Apostle's statement in its most literal sense: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

In conclusion, let me put it to the heart and conscience of each one present, Have you thus believed that Jesus is the Christ? Can you trace the hand of God in this faith,

and discover a work of grace upon your soul in connection with it? Having been brought under conviction of sin by the power of the Holy Ghost, have you been led by Him to take refuge at the foot of the cross? Have you been spiritually enlightened, so as to see in the blood of Christ the precious remedy for all your sins? Has the doctrine of the atonement thus become a glorious reality, loved, relied upon, and clung to with tenacity and joy by your soul, instead of being merely a dry creed? Has that precious truth, the imputed righteousness of Christ, become endeared to your heart, and the joy of your soul? Have you possessed yourself of this righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, so that you have put on Christ? Have you realized yourself to be complete in Him, completely justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law?

Has the Holy Ghost thus taken of all these precious things of Christ, and not merely shown them to your soul, but endowed you with them? Has He put you in possession of them? Has He led you to the atoning blood and applied it? Has He taken the robe of righteousness and put it on you by imputation? Has He enabled you to repose in simple faith, trust, and confidence, upon the blood and righteousness of Christ, giving peace to your conscience and joy to your soul? Has He thus enabled you to rest on Jesus, and on Him alone?

That there are those amongst us who have had such a blessed experience as this, I doubt not; but that there are others who have not, is equally certain. To such I would say,—You have this day had the defects of a nominal, notional faith laid before you, and contrasted with the nature of real living faith. Refuse not to recognize your

need of this. You have also heard that no man can come to the Son and exercise living faith upon Him, except the Father draw him. Cease, then, relying upon your own unaided powers, and seek for a living saving faith in Christ: first, by a humble study of the Word; secondly, by earnest application at the throne of grace for this as a gift of God. Persisting in this course, the time will come when all things shall be made plain to you, and amongst them will be this: a full assurance,—the witness of your own spirit with the Spirit of God,—that you have from the heart believed that Jesus is the Christ, and that you have indeed been born of God.

EVIDENCE OF REGENERATION.

No. IV.

VICTORY OVER THE WORLD.

I JOHN V. 4.

"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

WE have here another sign or evidence of the new birth. I would observe, at the outset, a diversity in the form of expression. Elsewhere John is personal: "Whosoever is born of God;" but here he says, "Whatsoever." Some manuscripts read "Whosoever;" but the greatest weight is in favour of our form; and it is practically a distinction without a difference, although in the mode of expression used by John we may trace the recognition of the two

principles coexistent in the renewed man,—the old nature and the new. Now it is concerning this new nature that John makes the statement in our text. It is as though he had said,—There is a remnant of the old nature still existing in him who has been born again, impeding and hindering the work of God in his soul. Nevertheless, whatsoever there is within him of the new nature will certainly lead to victory, for this reason, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;" and that which ensures this victory is the principle of a Divine life-giving faith dwelling in him who has been born of God.

In order that we may correctly understand the meaning of our text, it is absolutely necessary to inquire what the Apostle would here signify by the term, world; for every thing turns upon the meaning of that word. This is the more needful, because it is one

of those words which in Scripture are used in very different senses, and the meaning of which we must learn from the context.

(1) In the first place then, the word "world," sometimes means in Scripture, the terraqueous globe on which we dwell. "The world was made by Him." "God that made the world and all things therein."

(2) Secondly, it is used in the sense of all mankind indiscriminately. "God so loved the world." "That all the world may become guilty before God."

(3) But, thirdly, it is much more frequently used to describe that portion of mankind who are in their natural carnal state of enmity against God, as contrasted with those who have been born again.

Thus our Lord says to the unbelieving Jews: "The world cannot hate you, but

Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." And He draws this line of distinction between them and the children of God: "The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Again: St. Jude asks our Lord, "How is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world?" By these, and many other passages which might be quoted, we trace clearly in Scripture the existence of two different classes of persons, one of which as distinguished from the other is described under the term, "the world," sometimes "the men of this world." Now the character of these men is thus drawn in Scripture: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." "O righteous Father, the world hath not known

Thee!" "The world by wisdom knew not God." "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." "The whole world lieth in wickedness." Thus we learn what is the character of that large section of mankind which Scripture describes under the title, "the world," or "this world."

(4) But there is another use of the word world, very closely allied to the above, but of still wider application, for it is further used to describe the motives, principles, objects, and affections, which govern the men of the world, and likewise all those things which men naturally prize, such as riches, honours, pleasures, and so forth.

In this sense our Lord uses the word when He asks that pungent question, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Paul exclaims, using the word in this same

sense: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I unto the world." James uses the word in the same sense, when he gives this definition of pure and undefiled religion,—that the man under its influence keeps himself unspotted from the world. And, John, when he exhorts the brethren: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This passage moreover has this further advantage,—it gives us the Apostle's own interpretation of what he meant by the world, which he defines as "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

These are the words of the author of our text, and I think therefore we cannot have much difficulty in concluding what inter-

pretation to put upon the word "world," when he states, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." Having arrived at a correct interpretation of this leading word in our text, we must now proceed to make use of it. This we shall do in the first place by endeavouring to show what the Apostle means by the expression "overcoming the world;" neither shall we find much difficulty in this, having already got the right key.

In the prosecution of our inquiry into the meaning of the word world, we found that there was a broad line of distinction drawn in Scripture between the children of God and the children of this world; and also that the carnal principles which are described under the term world, were diametrically opposed to those of the new man. Thus our Lord said: "Ye are of this world: I am not of this world." Now this holds good

also of His disciples: they are not of this world.

John describes believers in the following terms: "We are of God: we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." What a graphic description is this of a real Christian! Contrasted herewith he classes all the rest of mankind, and declares: "The whole world lieth in wickedness," or as some interpret it, "in the wicked one."

This leads me to point out another important feature in connection with this division of mankind. As there are two, and only two such classes, the children of God, and the children of the world; so are they ruled over, each by a different King or Prince. Christ is the ruler or Prince over His people, concerning whom Paul thus writes: "God

hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church." On the other hand the world is ruled over by a Prince of their own, who exercises the power and authority of a mighty tyrant over them: him whom our Lord calls "the Prince of this world;" and Paul, "the god of this world."

Thus we find, first, principles, motives, feelings, affections, aims, and objects, all adapted to man's carnal nature, described in Scripture as the world. Secondly, men in their natural carnal unregenerate state, under the influence of such motives and principles. And, lastly, we further find that these principles are administered by that fallen spirit whom our Lord "calls the Prince of this world," who rules over, influences, and governs the men of this world.

These two armies we have now got set in battle array against each other; each

headed by their own Prince, each governed by different principles, and each ready to make war upon the other. It has been said that civil war is always more fierce and marked by more enmity than any other: they who aforetime lived together as brothers, when they quarrel and fight do so as none else; even as domestic quarrels develope worse passions, more hatred and enmity, than any others.

Now, in a sense, this warfare which we are endeavouring to describe may be called a civil war,—a family quarrel; for those who are on the Lord's side were not always so; they once belonged to the god of this world, and were in subjection to the ruler of the darkness of this world,—so that they are, in his eyes and in those of his loyal subjects, nothing better than rebels, who of all men are most hated by loyal subjects. I will prove this by a familiar illustration of what

pretation to put upon the word "world," when he states, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." Having arrived at a correct interpretation of this leading word in our text, we must now proceed to make use of it. This we shall do in the first place by endeavouring to show what the Apostle means by the expression "overcoming the world;" neither shall we find much difficulty in this, having already got the right key.

In the prosecution of our inquiry into the meaning of the word world, we found that there was a broad line of distinction drawn in Scripture between the children of God and the children of this world; and also that the carnal principles which are described under the term world, were diametrically opposed to those of the new man. Thus our Lord said: "Ye are of this world: I am not of this world." Now this holds good

Christian man, what is the result? His fellow-workmen are up in arms at once: they jeer him, they persecute him, they ratten him, and make his life miserable. Of course they do so: and why? Because he has become a rebel: they are all loyal subjects of the god of this world, whom John calls "that old serpent the Devil, and Satan which deceiveth the whole world." This man was one of Satan's loyal subjects also, aforetime, but he has rebelled and gone over into the service of the Prince of Peace, and these zealous God-hating subjects of the Prince of darkness cannot do otherwise than hate and persecute the rebel. This will explain what is going on daily in this Christian land, and enable you to understand the reason of it.

It may be said, however, if this hatred and enmity are mutual, the servant of Christ is as much to blame as the servants of the

Devil. Doubtless, were it not for a marked difference between the two, which I thus explain: the servants of the Devil hate and persecute the person of the servant of Christ, whilst the servant of Christ loves the person of Satan's slave and only hates his vices. He does not hate the drunkard, but his drunkenness; he does not hate the liar, but his lies; he does not hate the profane swearer, but his oaths. Thus the conduct of the two is diametrically opposite. The conduct of the servant of Satan is every thing which demoniacal malice and wickedness can prompt, whilst the conduct of the servant of Christ, making allowance for human weakness, is marked by patience, forbearance, longsuffering, and love; "not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing."

We must now turn our attention to that important principle contained in our text,

—the warfare which the real Christian carries on against the world, in his own heart. For, as we have seen, the world is not merely the men of the world, but the principles of the world. Now these principles are imbedded in every man's heart, they are a part of himself; and though when renewed in the spirit of his mind, when made a new creature in Christ Jesus, a wonderful change took place,—for a new nature was imparted, new motives, affections, and feelings, the tendency of all which has been to weaken the old nature, and supplant its influence by what Chalmers has so well described as "the expulsive power of a new affection;" but nevertheless, for all that, the root of bitterness still remains; the old man is not dead, the old serpent is not killed, but only scotched. Its tendency is constantly to revive, and to reassert its old principles.

Thus, to adopt the phraseology of the text, there is within the man,—first, the world, the principles, motives, and affections of his old carnal nature; secondly, the Divine element implanted by the Spirit in his soul, which John describes under the phrase, "Whatsoever is born of God." Now the precious soul-cheering truth enunciated by John is, that this Divine element, this new nature, which he defines as "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world;" overcometh those carnal principles and motives of his old nature by which he was once governed, which reside within him, as well as those external demonstrations of the same as seen in this world and practised by the men of this world.

Let me give you the words of that most thoroughly sensible and deeply spiritual writer, Thomas Scott, on this passage, which are greatly to the point:—

"That which is born of God, that new and heavenly nature which is communicated in regeneration, tends so powerfully to God and holiness, and includes in its essence such a spiritual judgment and such heavenly affections; that all, in whom it is found, are by it made victorious over the world; and overcome both their natural love for its honours, riches, pleasures, decorations, and friendship, and their natural fear of the frown, rage, and contempt of worldly men. Thus they are prepared for submitting to losses, exercising self-denial, and enduring affliction in the cause of God; and are taught to disregard the maxims, fashions, customs, and opinions of ungodly men, however eminent, numerous, or powerful.

"This new creature, as born of God, has the ascendency in the heart of the youngest and feeblest true Christian; and therefore they all aspire and attain unto this victory. For though the conflict of grace with corrupt nature and the allurements and terrors of the world is often very sharp, and the regenerate man may be baffled, cast down, nay, apparently slain in the battle; yet his seed remaineth in him, and the Divine life being again invigorated by the Holy Spirit, will excite him to arise and renew the combat with redoubled fortitude and resolution. So that at length the victory will be decidedly his, and he will habitually profess the truth and do the will of God, whatever loss, suffering, disgrace, or hardship may ensue."

It only remains for me to direct your attention to the instrument by which the

new man accomplishes this victory. John describes it in the latter clause of our text: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Thus we find that faith is the agent by which this great work is accomplished in the soul:—

"A realizing belief of the testimony of God, concerning visible and eternal things, operating by fear of His wrath, and hope of holy felicity in His favour; a believing reliance on Christ for redemption and all the blessings that flow from it, working by love and gratitude, with an abiding sense of God's presence at all times to witness every action, and to support, help, and comfort, those who trust in Him. These exercises of faith give such a determination to the true Christian's conduct, that he cannot habitually do what he knows to be contrary to the will of God, whatever emolument, credit, or favour, he may acquire by so doing; nor can he habitually neglect what God commands, to whatever loss, reproach, or suffering, it may expose him."

Thus it appears that faith, active living faith, enables a Christian man to overcome the world. First, because it brings his soul habitually under the power of the invisible

world, enabling him to read and understand the present world by the light of revelation, to despise its follies, to overcome its temptations; secondly, because it furnishes him with the most powerful motives, under the constraint of which he learns both to love and to obey; thirdly, because in connection with living faith there is a Divine power which nature possesses not, a power which enabled Paul to exclaim, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Let me then, in conclusion, present it to those who are seeking to serve God, as a prominent and distinct object, after which to aim, to overcome the world: first, the world within them; secondly, the world without them. The former is the most difficult of the two, for the remains of the old nature cleave and cling to you still, and you are prone to let motives, affections, and

desires spring up, dwell in your heart, and influence your actions, which are contrary to the new nature. These must be daily struggled against, and the cheering prospect held out to you in our text is, that if there be within you any element of the new birth, victory is certain: you shall overcome. The next warfare is against the world without you, the fashions, customs, follies, vices, races, balls, theatres, and all other actions, occupations, associations, communications, contrary to the kingdom of Christ and the Spirit of Christ.

Let me exhort thee to come to a decision on this matter. Once for all, break with the world and put thyself entirely on the side of Christ. Show thyself to the world as a courageous soldier of Christ, who having enlisted under His banner, art no longer disposed to parley with His enemies, no longer ashamed to show His colours, and art

ready to confess Him before men. Such is the standard of God's Word. Test thy condition in the sight of God and the surety of thy prospect for eternity, by it, bearing in mind that whatsoever is born of God must overcome the world; and, secondly, that this victory is accomplished by the exercise of living faith.

EVIDENCE OF REGENERATION.

No. V.

GOOD WORKS.

I JOHN II. 29.

"Every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him."

OUR text furnishes us with a very important positive evidence of regeneration. It may be objected to the sweeping language of John, that there are a great many people who do righteousness and have never been born of God; that we sometimes find active benevolent persons, who give liberally to the poor and even spend time in doing good to others, but who nevertheless give unmistakeable signs of never having been born of God. It may be they are ignorant of saving truth; it may be they

have never come to Christ for life; it may be they are depending on their own righteousness for acceptance with God; or many other unmistakable proofs they may be giving that they have never been born again; yet for all that they are doing works of righteousness.

To this objection I shall make answer in the words of our Scriptural Article: "Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, and for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin."

I am aware that our Reformers in enunciating the above principle are entirely at variance with the sentiments of the world, especially in this day of laxity of opinion; but for all that they are strictly Scriptural.

For just as I showed on a former occasion that the sacred writers refuse to call that faith which lacks the divine element, so in like manner do they refuse to recognize as works of righteousness, those actions, however good and benevolent in themselves, which are done by persons destitute of the grace of Christ and the inspiration of His Spirit.

Thus do we vindicate the statement of John in its most complete and literal sense: "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him."

Having then rescued the term "righteousness" from the false interpretation put upon it by the world, and shown what the Scriptural meaning of the word is, we are able to accept in the fullest sense the doctrine of our text. And since John has propounded to us this important truth, that the doing righteousness is an essential positive sign of

regeneration, let us further investigate what this righteousness is of which he speaks, and then inquire whether we have the witness of our own hearts, consciences, and lives, that we are doing righteousness.

Before entering on this subject, however, let me meet another objection. This doctrine savours of legality! We are justified by faith only, without the works of the law. What do you mean, then, by saying that men must do righteousness, as if they were to merit salvation at the hands of God by their own performances? To this objection we reply,—the Gospel plan of salvation is founded on two vital truths, which like the pillars of a great temple are perfectly independent and separate from each other, yet both essential and co-ordinate to the support of the edifice. These are, first, the justification of a sinner by faith only, without the works of the law; secondly, the

regeneration of the sinner by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Now it is of the latter, not the former, that we are treating to-day; and though we believe that every justified soul is also regenerated, and every regenerated soul justified (for it is the same God who accomplishes both these works in and for the sinner), yet are they essentially distinct departments in the economy of grace; and the confounding of the two has ever been the source of fatal error to the nominal Church, whilst I would observe that humble believers taught of God, however ignorant in other matters, never confound them. The instincts of their new nature, and the experience of their souls, alike forbid the confusion.

Proceeding, then, to the question,—What is this righteousness whereof the Apostle speaks? we answer, in the first place, it is an active principle, not a passive; it is a posi-

tive principle, not a negative. Though it includes abstinence from sin, yet is it much more,—it consists in conformity to the law and will of God.

The regenerate man is one who has been born of God. Now action is an essential attribute of life, as inaction is of death; and as this new life is of God, so the actings of it are towards God. The whole tendency of the new nature is in this direction. David gives expression to the actings of this new nature within him, when he exclaims, "O God, Thou art my God. Early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee; my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." And it finds expression from the heart of Paul in words like these: "The love of Christ constraineth us;" "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In such language we trace

the motive which stimulates to deeds of righteousness, and discover the hidden power which produces them. The renewed soul longs for holiness. It thirsts for conformity to the will of God. But it is not content with mere longing. It engages in active warfare against sin, and uses all the means within its reach to cultivate holiness, to grow in grace, to do deeds of righteousness.

The righteousness of which our text speaks, and which John declares to be a sign of the new birth, I shall treat of under two heads.

1. First, Spirituality of heart and life. I have already said that this righteousness is something more than mere abstinence from sin; I propound it to you as a sure sign of regeneration, when the soul is not content to be without God, but has active desires within, stirring up the heart and making it go out

after God, as we have seen in the case of David. Now that man is doing righteousness in the very highest sense of the word, who is following after God, striving to obtain closer communion with Him, endeavouring to live above the world, to triumph over and trample under foot every enemy of his soul, who ever longs to dwell on Pisgah's heights, whose heart is thoroughly loyal, putting honour upon God and zealous for His cause. We cannot sufficiently realize that the true source of outward holiness of life springs from the hidden communion of the soul with its God, that a holy life is the natural offspring of a holy heart, and a holy heart is one which, having been born again of the Spirit, is assiduous in keeping near to God. And we may safely say, Every one that doeth such righteousness as this, is born of God.

Is it not too just a complaint, however,

which may be brought, not against the children of the world, but against professing believers whose hearts we hope have been the subject of a work of grace, that they are too often content with lamenting over the coldness of their hearts and the feebleness of their spiritual life, substituting regrets and complaints for active effort, thus resembling too much the soul of the sluggard, "which desireth and hath nothing"?

The result of this sluggishness is simply this,—that no progress is made in the Divine life; the soul remains in a stationary unfruitful condition, and it is very hard to say whether or not a real work of grace has taken place in the heart of one who dwells so completely on this border land, between the territory of the world and the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. And, what is worse, it is equally difficult for the soul itself, when roused to make the inquiry or

when the solemnities of a death-bed are at hand, to be able to decide what its real state for eternity is: for such a sluggish unfruitful professor there is no such thing as assurance, no such thing as the witness of the Spirit with his own spirit that he is a child of God, much less any of the Apostle's confident ardour, desiring to depart and to be with Christ, as far better. What a sad thing for one who has known better days, to go out of this world hoping and fearing, but not knowing for sure whether his soul is saved or lost! Such however is the natural consequence of living so far below our privileges, so far from God. Oh, then you who are conscious of the truth of what I have said, arouse you, and seek after God with renewed energy, that this sad lot may not be your's at the hour of death.

2. In the next place, the words "doeth

righteousness," naturally suggest the idea of active effort,—of what are commonly called "good works." We have already seen that no man can do good works, in the Scriptural sense, without the grace of Christ and the inspiration of His Spirit; because, however good the work may be, if the performer of it leaves God entirely out of the question, He does not recognize it as good; for with Him the motive is every thing: so that the smallest and commonest act of kindness done with a Christian motive is regarded as a "good work;" whilst the most costly benevolence without having an eye to God, is utterly offensive to Him. Thus our Lord says: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." And elsewhere He gives us the reason: "Inasmuch as ye have done

it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." An act of benevolence done by a natural man, which has respect only to the person relieved and springs from the instincts of a compassionate heart, but without any regard to God, will not be esteemed a "good work" in the heavenly courts, by Him who claims the allegiance of the heart for Himself in every thing. Neither are such acts, however numerous, signs of a regenerate heart.

Again: if any one perform good works under the false idea of meriting favour with God, then are such performances utterly vain; and forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, and are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin. Having endeavoured to hedge in our subject from misconstruction and the erroneous conceptions of the world

of nominal Christians, I now proceed to propound to you that the doing righteousness, the performance of good works, is a real sign and evidence of the new birth. And this I would prove as follows. Regeneration is that radical change in the nature of man which brings it into closer conformity to the law and will of God.

Now whilst the first and great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" the second is like unto it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Here then we have the fundamental principle from which all the benevolent actions of a regenerate man proceed:—the love of God stimulating to the love of man. Whereas, the natural benevolence of an unregenerate man, scanty as it generally is, does not spring from the love of God, for no unregenerate man loves God; hence his benevolent acts, as our Article says, are not

pleasant to God. Thus, love to man springing from love to God, is an essential principle in the heart of a regenerate man ; and what is more, it is always found there. Show me a man whose affections are concentrated on himself, who has no love to his fellow-men springing from love to God, and I will show you an unregenerate man who is in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. There are only too many such, and amongst them some who pass well with the world. Now, where there is love to man in the heart, there will likewise be external proofs of that love: it will stimulate to active efforts for the good of mankind.

Having already drawn a broad line between the benevolence of the regenerate and that of the unregenerate, arising from the motive, I will now draw some further distinctions in the following particulars.

1. The benevolence of a regenerate man is much more systematic and self-denying than that of the unregenerate. The latter will sometimes be liberal, either constitutionally, or by fits and starts; whilst the former lays out his life systematically to do good, is prepared to encounter obloquy, and to go counter to the world in prosecution of his beneficent projects.

I would ask—By whom is the greatest proportion of good works performed in this country? is it not principally by earnest Christians,—a little band in every city, town, village, and country,—whilst the great mass are doing little or nothing? If you are in any trouble, sorrow, or spiritual distress, to whom do you turn,—to the world, or to the Christian?

2. Again: the benevolence of an unregenerate man has chiefly regard to the

wants of the body, whilst the man who has been born again, though he neglects not temporal distress, has his eye mainly fixed on man's better part, the soul. What cold indifference is displayed by the world towards Christian missions! Many people, and those too who come to the Lord's table, will coolly tell you, "Oh, I have no faith in missions!" And how should they? do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? How can you expect a man who has never been truly in earnest about his own soul to care anything for the souls of others, especially of those he never saw, on the other side of the world. It is true there has been a great stir for church building lately, and many persons have given largely to that cause who have never been born again; but then, church building is not a spiritual work, it has only a very distant relationship to it, and may be stimulated by the fashion of the

day, a taste for the fine arts, and a great variety of other motives besides the love of God. And this serves to illustrate how the very same act may be done by one man in such a way as to be acceptable to God, whilst by another it may be most offensive to Him who searcheth the hearts of the children of men, and knows their secret motives as man cannot. But church building is not spiritual work: after the church has been built our truly scriptural services may be marred and caricatured in it; it may be turned to no better account than to serve as an arena for the display of Ecclesiastical millinery, Romish mummeries, idle processions, and other follies contrary to the spirit and the law of our Protestant Church; while from its pulpit, instead of sounding forth the precious truths of God's Word, nothing better may be heard than feeble imitations of the corrupt doctrine of Rome. This is a

humiliating confession to make, but it is unhappily too true, and concealment of the fact would serve no good purpose, if it were practicable, which it is not.

A real love of souls, however, you will ever find to be a sign of a regenerate man. You do not find the men of this world putting forth efforts to convey the glad tidings of salvation either to their neighbours or the heathen.

But then, mark me, it must be *the glad tidings*, the Gospel of the grace of God, — the precious Book and its contents. Rome has gone forth into the mission field, leaving the Bible behind, to teach mariolatry, and other delusions of Antichrist; this is no sign of regeneration, far otherwise: but it is a sure proof of a man's having been born again when, with a heart overflowing with love to God and man, he cannot keep the good tidings to himself, but must tell it out to others, that they may

become partakers of the same grace with himself.

3. There is another feature which distinguishes the benevolent actions of the regenerate man: they are not performed by him with a view to reward, they are not done to save his soul, but because his soul is already saved.

The regenerate man is one who has already closed with the offers of Christ, has already gratefully accepted a free salvation, so that he has no further anxiety on that score, and it is becanse his heart is overflowing with gratitude for this wonderful gift,—a free, undeserved, unmerited salvation conferred upon him by Christ, without money and without price,—that therefore he consecrates his life to the service of his God and Saviour. "Good works" spring from this motive, and are therefore all from love

and nothing for reward. I repeat it, all holy obedience, all works of righteousness, are performed by the new man, not in order that he may thereby be saved, but because he is already saved, and knows it.

I conclude with the inquiry,—Have we the witness of our own hearts, consciences, and lives, that we are doing righteousness? It is contrary to the law of the Christian man to be a sluggard. He who has been born again has a heart under the constraint of Christ's love; he has arrived at the conclusion henceforth not to live unto himself, but unto Him which died for him and rose again; he has made a complete surrender to Christ. Having been bought with blood, having received a free salvation, he no longer looks on himself as his own, but as Christ's. Hence, his time, his influence, his substance, are all held by him and used by him as a steward for Christ. The inevitable

essential result of which is that he becomes active and zealous in good works,—in doing righteousness.

Now I invite you who hear me to go home and search your hearts, to ascertain whether they are under the influence of the motives I have here described; and hence, whether you have this sign and evidence of having been born of God, that you are doing righteousness, aiming therein at the glory of God and the welfare of man.

EVIDENCE OF REGENERATION.

No. VI.

HE "KEEPETH HIMSELF."

I JOHN V. 18.

"He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

THIS is the sixth and last sign of the new birth which I shall produce from this Epistle. And it is in some sense a summing up of all that has gone before. For in the first place, he that is begotten of God keepeth himself from committing sin. Secondly, he keepeth himself in a state of love to mankind. Thirdly, he keepeth himself in a condition of vigorous, active, lively faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Fourthly, he keepeth himself from the world, main-

taining a vigorous warfare against it, which results in a victory that overcometh the world. And fifthly, he doeth righteousness.

There is, however, that in the words forming the prominent feature of our text, which entitles them to an independent consideration, as being intimately connected with success in the Christian life. There is something very instructive as well as impressive in the form of those words: "He keepeth himself." It suggests to us what a solemn responsibility is committed to every living man by his Creator. God has put into his hands, so to speak, a body and a soul, saying to the man, "Occupy till I come. Take charge of this body, keep it in health, preserve it from excess, from sloth and self-indulgence, from immorality and vice: keep it for Me. Take charge of this soul,—it is immortal: improve it and cultivate it; see that it fulfil its duty both towards Me and towards man. Keep

it likewise for Me. Oh, man, thou art a probationer for eternity, to thee I have committed this solemn trust,—thyself: see that thou keep thyself, so as to be able to give a good account thereof at the day of judgment!"

The men of the world never seem to realize that so responsible a trust, involving such important consequences, has been committed to them, or they could never act as they do. The fact is, that till the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, has reached a man's heart, he never becomes thoroughly conscious of the responsibility of his position in this world. And no man begins to keep himself, in the sense of our text, till he has been begotten of God. But when the soul has been enlightened and the heart renewed by the Spirit of God, then a new consciousness springs up within, and the man realizes himself in every relation as a steward of

God; not merely as regards his substance, but primarily as regards himself: and Divine grace sets before him as the great end of life, to keep himself for God, and as God would have him.

The result of this self-keeping is twofold. First, the man keepeth himself from apostasy; and this follows from the fact, that the seed of which he was born again is "not corruptible seed, but incorruptible," as Peter tells us; and hence in the words of John, He does not commit such sin as leads to apostasy, "for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

They who at one time promised well and afterwards fell away, did so because they had never really been born of God. Such cases have existed in every age, even when Christianity was purest and had the advantage of Apostles and miracles to sustain it. Thus John, as well as Paul, had the sorrow

of dealing with such, and of them he says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

Secondly, he keepeth himself from habits of sin: he does not willingly allow sin. When he sinneth,—for as Solomon says, "There is no man that sinneth not,"—it is as it were under protest; not willingly, but the conscience for the most part crying out at the time; or if it be lulled into a fatal slumber, it soon wakes up and cries out louder than ever, and will give the man no peace till he has repented and humbled himself before God.

The consequence is, that sin does not get a chance to become a habit,—for no sooner does he commit a given act contrary to God's law, than conscience makes such a

disturbance in the house, that the soul becomes like Rama,—where a voice was heard: "lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." Nothing will satisfy the enlightened and renewed believer under such circumstances but true repentance, humbling himself before God, washing again in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, resolutions for amendment of life, and buckling on the armour afresh to renew the conflict; so that habits of sin are not formed, though single acts of sin may sometimes be committed.

Thus, the man who has been born of God does not allow himself willingly in any sin, but watches and prays, in faith, fear, and love, to be preserved from temptation or supported under it; and with the aid of the Holy Spirit he keepeth himself.

From this there result two things: the first very important; the last essential to eternal life. First, Christian consistency. You cannot overrate the importance of this element of Christain character,—or perhaps I might more correctly call it, this result of a combination of the various Christian graces which ought to distinguish the character of him who has been born of God.

Can any thing be more discreditable or more injurious to the interests of religion than an inconsistent Christian? Very great injury is done to the souls of others, many waverers are repelled, many weak believers offended, and all God's true children grieved and afflicted by the inconsistent conduct of those who make a decided profession of religion. Those inconsistencies are of various kinds.

I will endeavour briefly to touch on a few. It is very inconsistent in those who

come to the Lord's table and make a profession of following Christ, to enter into the frivolities of the world,—the ball, the theatre, the race-course. I have not time to discuss this subject at large, nor do I care to do so, for I am not now dealing with the world of nominal professors, but with those who would have us believe that they are in earnest about salvation and have embraced the Gospel from the heart.

Now if there be not an inner consciousness in the hearts of such persons of the inconsistency of their conduct, I fear I cannot impart it. If they are so spiritually blind as not to see that such associations, habits, and pursuits, are inconsistent with the spirit of true religion, and hence offensive to our loving and holy Lord, whom they profess to serve,—then they are under a delusion which I cannot remove.

In the next place, it is very inconsistent

in those who profess vital religion, and a great stumbling block to others, when the standard of their character does not rise greatly above that of the world. It ought to stand out clear, bright, and beautiful before mankind, so that the person professing Christianity should confessedly be holier and better than others.

It should manifestly appear that selfishness is greatly subdued, and that the man is living no longer to himself, but to Him who died for him and rose again. It should manifestly appear that the man is not loving the world in any form, and that in the administration of his substance he is acting wisely and liberally as God's steward. It should manifestly appear that he is subduing and keeping under his natural infirmities, whatever they may be. It should manifestly appear that Christian graces abound in his character,—such as love,

meekness, humility, forbearance, long-suffering, gentleness, and other qualities only to be learnt by studying the character and sitting at the feet of Jesus.

When professing Christians do not take the pains to keep themselves,—are not watchful over their habits, their tempers, their words,—the result is, that they bring great discredit on themselves and religion, even when from other signs and evidences we have reason to hope and believe that, notwithstanding these infirmities, they are real Christians. It is a very humiliating thing to hear it said of such a person,—He is a very worthy man, it is true; but then he is so touchy, or he has such a shocking temper.

You have conceived a very high respect for the character of some one, his attendance at church and the Lord's table is regular and devout, he is a most assiduous Sunday-school teacher, and most liberal in contri-

buting to every good thing. How shocked then are you by discovering some glaring blemishes which seem to tarnish all. As, for instance, great self-importance and readiness to take offence at seeming neglects, showing sadly how little effort has been bestowed to subdue native selfishness; so, that though we may still charitably hope that the honour of God and the good of souls are the motives which influence his conduct, yet is it too plain to be overlooked that he is not content to be lost sight of and forgotten, and that his own self-importance has never been subdued. Thus there is residing within him an element of strife, which may take fire at any moment, and cause bickerings, discontent, and other most unseemly conduct.

The Apostle James had to complain of the inconsistency of professing Christians in his day; and that was not a day like our's,

when religion walks abroad in her silver slippers, and a certain amount of religious profession is a creditable thing. On the contrary, at that day a man had to take his life in his hand, and count the cost before professing Christianity. Nevertheless, even in that day, James had to exclaim, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" And even at that day he found it needful to utter the following note of warning: "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil

work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits; and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

Let me earnestly implore you, then, to aim at Christian consistency in every department of life; but above all, strive to cultivate humility and love, the two leading Christian graces, which if they grow and develop to maturity, will go far to crown you with that consistent holiness whereby you shall adorn the doctrine of your God and Saviour in all things.

The next result of a Christian man's keeping himself, which is essential to eternal life, is his final perseverance. The necessity of this to salvation is manifest, and need not be argued; the opposite to perseverance is apostasy. We have already shown that he who is really born of God cannot aposta-

tize, and hence must persevere. Our Lord testifies: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." And Paul tells the Hebrews, "We are Christ's house,"—a figure signifying saved souls,—"if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

I set this before you simply as one of the sure and blessed results of having been begotten of God. There is no failure in that birth, no premature death, but a surety of perseverance unto eternal life. Only delude not yourselves with the false persuasion that you have been born again, when the Scriptural signs and marks of the new birth are not upon you nor within you.

There is another very cheering and encouraging statement in our text, connected with the new birth: viz., that he who keepeth himself as we have described, is protected

from the evil influence and power of Satan: that wicked one toucheth him not. That Satan should have power in this world is a mystery we shall never fathom till we know as we are known. We accept the teaching of God's Word on this subject as a fact, which tallies with all our experience in the world and in our own hearts. But it is a great consolation to know that the power of this fearful enemy is a restrained and a controlled power; that we are furnished with a shield against his darts, an antidote against his poison, if we will but use them. The means of protection are resistance: he can compel no man against his will. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he

may devour; whom resist stedfast in the faith."

Now the man who keepeth himself, complies with these exhortations culled from the writings of three Apostles: he has resisted and does resist; he has put on and keeps on the whole armour of God; he is sober and vigilant, stedfast in the faith. Hence that wicked one toucheth him not.

Our subject is now concluded, as far as I proposed to carry it. We have gone over six separate tests of the new birth furnished to us by John the Evangelist, in each and every one of which I have shown you how great, how fundamental, is the difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate. I have furnished you with the means of discovering to which of the two each one of you belongs. Further than this I cannot go: the responsibility is now resting on your own shoulders to avail yourselves of the

Scriptural information you have received. Only let me remind you that to get any good by what you have heard, you must be really in earnest about the salvation of your soul, and not a mere hearer. You must study the Word of God assiduously in private, with self-application. You must fully realize the natural blindness of your heart to spiritual things, and hence the necessity of being enlightened by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. And, lastly, you must get this gift by real earnest persistent prayer, making it a prominent object before you in daily supplication. I believe there never was a person who put honour upon the Bible, by repudiating prejudice and human teaching, and who brought his whole soul to the reverent study and reception of God's Word; who, moreover, being conscious of his ignorance, obliquity of spiritual vision, and blindness to the things of God, per-

sistently and earnestly besought God to enlighten him; but that he got these two great blessings,—the conversion of his heart and the enlightening of the eyes of his understanding, spiritually and experimentally to know the truth: and whosoever has received these gifts is born of God. May many such, the fruit of our ministry in this place, be our joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming.

I cannot however conclude this series of discourses on a subject so vital, experimental, and all-important to the soul's salvation, as "regeneration and its evidences," without endeavouring once more to press upon the conscience of each and every one, the great danger of self-deception. To be born again is essential to eternal life. What stronger words could our Lord have used than, "Ye must be born again"? The issues for eter-

nity are hanging on this question. And yet how many are the delusions wherewith men blind themselves in reference to it!

1. Some are so entirely insensible to the spiritual nature of that change of heart and life which it involves, and do so completely ignore its evidences, as to delude themselves with the figment commonly called baptismal regeneration, and thus get over the difficulty, but at a fatal cost to their own souls; and what is worse, in the case of ministers of Christ, at a fatal cost to the souls committed to their care and teaching. By instilling so false, unscriptural, and dangerous a doctrine into their minds, which the carnal heart is only too ready to embrace, as being congenial to the unrenewed nature, they do all in their power to prevent men from realizing the vital force and energy of our Lord's words, "Ye must be born again;" deluding

them with the idea that they have been born again, whilst they are still in their sins, carnal and unregenerate as they came into the world.

2. Others, notwithstanding everything which can be said to them to the contrary, though they have had the important truth clearly and earnestly set before them, times without number, remain in the same state of stolid indifference, and never realize their danger from the unquestionable absence of all signs of regeneration in their souls. There is perhaps no class of persons more discouraging to deal with than these. Much rather would I make a man angry, and even provoke him to violent passion, by proclaiming to him unpalatable truths, than that the vital statements of God's Word, bearing unmistakable testimony that he is perishing in his sins, should produce no effect, and fall

to the ground like a spent shaft, short of the mark. Far more hope is there of a man whose soul is stirred, and even enraged by the message of truth, than there is of that unreflecting creature, whose passive, unthinking mind is never disturbed, and with whom all doctrine is a matter of perfect indifference.

How many such are to be found in all our congregations, who return home to eat their dinners and forget the discourse, who, never once in their lives have said to themselves, "Can what this man says be true? then I must be in a bad way. I will go home and search the Scriptures and look into the matter for myself."

3. Then there are those who have a little more intelligence and interest in religion, and flatter themselves that they have been born again. But whatever they may think

themselves, no one else thinks so, because their lives do not bear testimony to the fact: the signs and evidences of regeneration are wanting.

Self-love deludes such persons sadly to their ruin, and they inflict immense injury on true religion, by making a great profession, unsustained by holiness and spirituality of heart and life. And yet, if you tell them so they are highly offended; for humility cannot thrive where self-love and self-sufficiency prevail. Of such a character we may speak in the words of John, "He walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

4. Again: there are others who having been brought up by irreligious parents, or never having been put in the way of hearing the distinctive truths of the Gospel, have grown into life with notions little above the level

of natural religion. They have never thought on the subject, but have adopted the conventional standard of the world around. Some common-place opinions have got such hold of their minds, that do what you will you cannot drive them out. When on their death-bed, the confession of their faith is too frequently embodied in the following formula: "I have led a good life, I have been a kind husband, an indulgent father, a good neighbour, an honest man; I attended church, I took the sacrament; and as for my sins and short comings, I hope God will forgive them for Christ's sake."

Now such persons are as ignorant of the doctrine of the new birth as a Chinaman: they know no more what our Lord meant, when he said, "Ye must be born again," than a Turk. And yet, strange to say, many such have had the faithful message sounded in their ears, and carefully explained to them,

times without number. I have known men and women sit under the sound of the Gospel for years, and never get one step beyond the ignorant unscriptural notions with which they started. For want of thought, for want of self-inspection, for want of prayer and study of the Word, they reap no benefit from the choicest means of grace. Of such it may be said, "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

So many and so various are the ways by which the carnal heart deceives itself, and contrives, with the aid of Satan, to elude the piercing convictions which our Lord's words, "Ye must be born again," are calculated to produce, when applied to the conscience by the Spirit of God.

Surely this solemn consideration should rouse and stir the hearts of numbers to realize their guilt and danger. Well may

one exclaim, who is conscious of no experience that can in any sense be called the new birth, "If the great majority of mankind thus live and die without experiencing this grace of regeneration which is needful to salvation, must not the danger be very great of my doing so likewise? Let me not delay, then, another day in seeking the Lord, and let me give Him no rest, till earnest prayer has secured for me that wonderful gift, a new nature; and I have obtained both the precious reality and the evidence of it, imparting a full assurance to my soul that I have passed from death unto life, and have been adopted into the family of God's dear Son."

With earnest entreaty I implore you, who have not yet experienced such grace, to act this part of common sense, and lose no time in thus securing the salvation of your souls; that so, "being born again, not of corruptible

seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," and carrying about with you in your heart and life the evidences of regeneration and signs of the new birth, clear and unmistakable, you may have joy and peace in believing, now, and in God's own good time, an entrance may be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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